



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **19.9.2024: One year since the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh. An appeal to the Swiss government.**

**On the eve of the anniversary of Azerbaijan's final assault on the de facto Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), on September 19, 2023, an alliance of human rights organizations and NGOs is calling on the Swiss Federal Council to hold Azerbaijan - the host country of the UN Climate Change Conference COP29 - to account for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against Armenians.**

One year ago, more than 100,000 Armenians were expelled from their homeland of Nagorno Karabakh after a blockade lasting almost ten months. Currently, 23 Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh, including eight former political and military leaders, are illegally detained in Azerbaijani prisons. Meanwhile, the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno Karabakh is already underway. It is unacceptable that Azerbaijan's crimes are being whitewashed by the COP29, which this year is taking place in Baku, from November 11 to 22. A number of cantonal and federal parliamentary initiatives are calling on the Federal Council delegation in Baku, alongside other government delegations, to address the ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh and demand the release of the 23 Armenian hostages.

At the same time, human rights defenders are warning of further attacks. On numerous occasions, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has publicly claimed the territory of the Republic of Armenia or referred to it as "Western Azerbaijan." In 2016, 2020 and 2022, Azerbaijan used military attacks to test the international community's acceptance of such invasions and failed to provoke a reaction. There are therefore grounds to fear that Azerbaijan will continue its attacks on the Republic of Armenia after COP29.

In the region of Nakhichevan, where Armenians lived for centuries, Azerbaijan has destroyed almost all Armenian cultural heritage. It is to be feared that the Armenian cultural heritage of Nagorno Karabakh will suffer the same fate. Azerbaijan has also announced that it will destroy all the Armenian buildings constructed in Nagorno Karabakh over the last 32 years.

Finally, there is an urgent need to promote contacts and exchanges within civil society, above all to reduce the existing prejudices against Armenia in Azerbaijan. As the Council of Europe and the International Court of Justice have emphasized, these are systematically fomented by the Aliyev regime and the media which it controls.

We call on the Federal Council to demand the release of all Armenian hostages, and to affirm its support for the right of Nagorno Karabakh's Armenians to return to their homeland. We also call for Switzerland's delegation at COP29 to address these issues.

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