October 5, 2023

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We want to recommend as a potential speaker for the Conservative Opportunity Society next year Dr. David Grigorian, the author of the article we previously submitted.

We have close relations with Dr. Grigorian. While Dr. Grigorian is sympathetic and supportive of our client, the NDA, he is very much considered a foremost independent expert and considered one of the most respected Armenians in the public policy and international space. Dr. Grigorian previously served at the IMF for two decades, and is now at Harvard:

https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/mrcbg/about/fellows/senior-fellows#david-grigorian

We also want to flag for you and the Congressman’s attention the following most recent article in Breitbart “‘Ghost Towns’: Armenian Christians Vanish from Disputed Region as Azerbaijan Moves In”:


The full text of the article to which the URL refers:

GHOST TOWNS: ARMENIAN CHRISTIANS VANISH FROM DISPUTED REGION AS AZERBAIJAN MOVES IN

JOHN HAYWARD
3 Oct 2023 7:14

United Nations relief personnel arrived in Nagorno-Karabakh on Sunday to discover that nearly all of the ethnic Armenian Christians who have lived in the region for centuries have fled, leaving only “ghost towns” for invading Muslim-majority Azerbaijan.

“What is there left for the UN to monitor? No one is there any more, everyone is gone, it’s a ghost town,” one Armenian refugee remarked to the UK Guardian on Monday, grimly amused that the U.N. would send “monitors” to the aftermath of a stampede.
Nagorno-Karabakh is a region that fell within the borders of Azerbaijan after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but had long been inhabited by ethnic Armenians who desired independence. After years of skirmishes and two recent full-blown wars between Azerbaijan and Armenia over control of Karabakh, Azerbaijan settled the issue with a swift and destructive invasion three weeks ago.

The Karabakh separatists surrendered to Azerbaijan and agreed to disband their separatist government, which was headquartered in the city of Stepanakert. Azerbaijan gave assurances that residents of the region could remain, promising fair government and protection for lives and property.

Absolutely no one in the former “Republic of Artsakh” believed these promises, especially after victorious Azeri forces began arresting every member of the Artsakh government they could get their hands on, charging hundreds of them with war crimes. Virtually the entire population decamped for Armenia last week, fearing an Azeri campaign of ethnic cleansing. Some of the refugees felt that even Armenia was not safe enough, so they kept going until they were in Russia.

On Monday, the Armenian government said over 100,000 of the estimated 120,000 residents of Karabakh have already fled. A local official said the number of civilians remaining in Stepanakert could be “counted on one hand.” Stepanakert’s population was somewhere between 55,000 and 75,000 before the Azeri invasion.

Some of those refugees told the Guardian the U.N.’s visit to Karabakh “came too late,” and monitors really should have been on the ground before Azerbaijan invaded.

“Where were the international monitors when we were being starved? It is too late now,” one of them grumbled, referring to Azerbaijan’s blockade of the only road connecting Karabakh to Armenia.

Former International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo told a U.S. congressional hearing in early September that Azerbaijan’s blockade was an effort to use “starvation as a means of genocide.” Ocampo said the “responsible person” for this genocidal campaign was Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev.

Richard Giragosian, director of the Regional Studies Center in Armenia’s capital of Yerevan, said the international community set a “dangerous precedent” with a slow and diffident response to Azerbaijan’s attack.

Giragosian told ABC News on Monday the weak U.N. response was “a seeming vindication of the use of force over diplomacy – a military victory of authoritarian power over a struggling democracy.”

“What we see is Azerbaijan simply does not care about Western threats, pronouncements, and at the same time, the West has little leverage over Azerbaijan,” he said. Seemingly dazed by what they saw, U.N. inspectors estimated there were fewer than 1,500 ethnic Armenians left in Karabakh as of Monday evening.

“The mission was struck by the sudden manner in which the local population left their homes and the suffering the experience must have caused,” the U.N. team said.
The Associated Press (AP) watched the “last bus carrying ethnic Armenians” rumble across the border on Monday, carrying 15 refugees with “serious illnesses and mobility problems.” Some of the few remaining Armenians are old and infirm residents who fear they might not survive a grueling escape or life as a refugee, so they decided to stay put and take their chances with the Azeris.

“Armenian Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan said some people had died during the exhausting and slow journey over the single mountain road into Armenia that took as long as 40 hours. The exodus followed a nine-month Azerbaijani blockade of the region that left many suffering from malnutrition and lack of medicine,” the AP noted.

Azerbaijan insists it has done nothing wrong and the refugees brought suffering upon themselves needlessly by fleeing in panic. Aliyev on Monday repeated promises that Armenians who remain in Karabakh will be protected and allowed to keep their language, culture, and religion. The Armenians are mostly Christian, while the Azerbaijans are mostly Muslim.

The New York Times (NYT) cited some reasons why the departing Armenians of Karabakh were skeptical of Aliyev's promises:

In 2012, Mr. Aliyev pardoned, promoted and hailed as a hero an Azerbaijani military officer who had been convicted in Hungary of murdering an Armenian classmate in a NATO course with an ax. After serving six years of a life sentence in Hungary, the murderer was sent home to Azerbaijan, which had promised to keep him in jail. He was met at the airport with flowers and set free.

“Anyone who thinks that Armenians can live under that regime is a fantasist,” said Eric Hacopian, the host of a weekly show on CivilNet, a popular Armenian internet television channel.

Unverified reports of mass killings and rape have flooded social media and been exchanged by people now in flight, stirring fears of a repeat of the 1915 Armenian genocide by the Ottoman Empire.

There are also good reasons to worry that Aliyev might not halt his conquests at the Armenian border. Azerbaijan is strongly allied with Turkey, and both countries have expressed a desire to create a major trade route from Turkey through the Azerbaijani territory of Nakhchivan – which happens to be cut off from the rest of Azerbaijan by a sizable chunk of Armenian territory.

Some regional analysts fear Aliyev will use force to seize the Armenian land he needs to “reintegrate” Nakhchivan with the rest of Azerbaijan, much as the September invasion reintegrated Karabakh.

The fall of Artsakh created an enormous rift between Armenia and Russia, its longtime patron. Armenian refugees were spitting mad at Russian “peacekeepers,” deployed after the Moscow-brokered ceasefire in the 2020 Armenia-Azerbaijan war, who did nothing when Azerbaijan invaded and drove the people of Karabakh from their homes.

“It’s difficult to say who is to blame. There is no direct reason for such actions,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov shrugged when asked about the exodus from Karabakh.
“Analysts say that Russia has chosen to side with the growing power of oil-rich Azerbaijan over its sparsely populated and diplomatically isolated historic ally Armenia,” the *Times of Israel* observed on Monday.

On Tuesday, the Armenian parliament angered Moscow by voting to join the International Criminal Court (ICC) – which has branded Russian President Vladimir Putin a war criminal, and instructed all member states to arrest him on sight. The Putin regime has warned Armenia that joining the ICC would be seen as an “extremely hostile” act.