



Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi

ISSN: 2148-2292

12 (1) 2025

Academic Journal of History and Idea

Araştırma Makalesi | Research Article

Geliş tarihi | Received: 05.01.2025

Kabul tarihi | Accepted: 09.02.2025

Yayın tarihi | Published: 25.02.2025

Hasan Safari

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2405-353X>

Dr. Hasan Safari, Senior Researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Academician Z. M. Bunyadov of ANAS, Azerbaijan, seferihesen@gmail.com

Atıf Künyesi | Citation Info

Safari, H. (2025). The Massacre and Deportation Committed by the Pahlavi Regime Against Azerbaijani Turks (1946). *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi*, 12 (1), 1010-1025. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15629677>

The Massacre and Deportation Committed by the Pahlavi Regime Against Azerbaijani Turks (1946)

Abstract

The article examines the fact that the Pahlavi regime subjected Azerbaijanis to genocide and deported them in 1946. In 1946, the Pahlavi regime committed genocide against the local population, the officials and officials of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party and the National Government who did not leave their cities when they deployed troops to reoccupy South Azerbaijan. Alongside the genocide, the Pahlavi regime exiled tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis to different outside regions of Iran South Azerbaijan. In addition, tens of thousands of people were forced to leave their ancestral home and move to North Azerbaijan. The genocide perpetrated by the Pahlavi regime in South Azerbaijan was planned by both the Iranian army and the plainclothes gendarmes affiliated with the Pahlavi regime, as well as the gangs of landlords who were affiliated with the regime and organized and armed by the regime.

Keywords: *South Azerbaijan, genocide, deportation, Pahlavi, National Government*

Pehlevi Rejimi Tarafından Azerbaycan Türklerine Karşı Gerçekleştirilen Katliam ve Sürgün (1946)

Öz

Makale, Pehlevi rejiminin 1946 yılında Azerbaycanlıları soykırıma tabi tutarak sürgün ettiği gerçeğini incelemektedir. 1946 yılında Pehlevi rejimi, Güney Azerbaycan'ı yeniden işgal etmek için birlikler gönderdiğinde şehirlerini terk etmeyen yerel halka, Azerbaycan Demokrat Partisi ve Milli



<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/atdd>

Hükümet yetkililerine ve memurlarına karşı soykırım uygulamıştır. Soykırımın yanı sıra, Pehlevi rejimi on binlerce Azerbaycanlıyı, İran, Güney Azerbaycan'ın farklı dış bölgelerine sürgün etti. Ayrıca on binlerce insan ata yurtlarını terk ederek Kuzey Azerbaycan'a göç etmek zorunda kalmıştır. Pehlevi rejiminin Güney Azerbaycan'da gerçekleştirdiği soykırım, hem İran ordusu ve Pehlevi rejimine bağlı sivil jandarmalar hem de rejime bağlı ve rejim tarafından örgütlenen ve silahlandırılan toprak ağası çeteleri tarafından planlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güney Azerbaycan, soykırım, sürgün, Pehlevi, Milli Hükümet

Introduction

After Reza Khan seized power through a coup in 1925, with British support to end the rule of the Qajar Turks in Iran and Southern Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani Turks across Iran, particularly in Southern Azerbaijan, faced severe oppression and discriminatory policies. The objective was to Persianize the ancient and predominant Turkish ethnic population in these regions and to erase any traces of Turkish presence in order to establish a greater Persian state. In this regard, on one hand, the Azerbaijani Turks' language was banned and removed from all spheres of life. On the other hand, Azerbaijani Turks were subjected to severe social, political, and economic oppression and discrimination. This prolonged oppression and discrimination led to significant socio-economic and infrastructural decline in Southern Azerbaijan. These injustices caused widespread dissatisfaction among the population and gradually gave rise to a serious national liberation movement. During World War II, when Soviet troops entered Iran, deposed Reza Shah, and replaced him with his son Mohammad Reza, no substantial progress was made regarding the rights of the people in Southern Azerbaijan. In this situation, the patriotic figures of Southern Azerbaijan, under the leadership of Seyid Jafar Pishevari, initiated serious organizational efforts to establish a national government. Soon, elections were held for the National Assembly of Southern Azerbaijan, and on December 12, 1945 (21 Azar), the Azerbaijani National Assembly passed a resolution to establish the Azerbaijani National Government, entrusting its formation to Seyid Jafar Pishevari, the head of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (Rəhimli, 2015). However, a year later, in 1946, the Pahlavi regime deployed military forces into Southern Azerbaijan. As a result of Iran's expansionist policy, Southern Azerbaijan was once again occupied. The Pahlavi regime committed a horrific genocide in the region. Tens of thousands of innocent people from cities and villages across Southern Azerbaijan were massacred. At the same time, in order to prevent the surviving population from resuming their struggle for self-determination, a large number of people were deported from Southern Azerbaijan. Primarily, officials and members of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party and the National Government who had not left their cities were subjected to genocide by the Pahlavi

regime. Alongside mass executions, massacres, and deportations, the regime also arrested many individuals. Tens of thousands of innocent deportees were forcibly relocated to the southern regions of Iran, which were uninhabitable and harsh. Many of them perished due to extreme heat, drought, hunger, and disease. Following the military invasion of Southern Azerbaijan by the Pahlavi regime, tens of thousands of people were forced to abandon their ancestral lands and seek refuge in the Soviet Union—specifically, in the Azerbaijan Republic.

1. The genocide committed by the Pahlavi regime in Southern Azerbaijan in 1946

In 1946, the Pahlavi regime reoccupied Southern Azerbaijan and carried out a horrific genocide. This genocide was systematically executed by both the Iranian army and plainclothes gendarmes affiliated with the Pahlavi regime, as well as armed groups organized by the Iranian state, including landowners loyal to the regime. From the very day the National Democratic Movement in Azerbaijan was established and Southern Azerbaijan was liberated from Persian rule, the Tehran regime resorted to inhumane and vile methods against Azerbaijani national forces. From the very beginning, these actions were aimed at suppressing the just struggle of Azerbaijanis through mass genocide.

One of these methods involved exploiting the religious beliefs of the local population against Azerbaijani forces. The Pahlavi regime used its affiliated clerics and mujtahids, including the infamous Mirhas Ardabili, Mirmansur Mansuri, and others, to issue fatwas and declarations that justified the extrajudicial killings of Azerbaijani national movement members and, in reality, all Azerbaijanis. These decrees called for their immediate execution without trial upon sight. This incitement played a significant role in facilitating the genocide, as many Azerbaijanis were slaughtered by Iranian state-affiliated armed groups, criminals, and the Iranian army without any resistance (Safari, 1362). Another vile tactic used by the Iranian state in the occupation of Azerbaijan and the genocide was the mobilization and preparation of Azerbaijani-origin forces, landowners, and criminals loyal to the regime for combat. The Pahlavi regime sought to attribute the crimes, genocide, and occupation it committed to the Azerbaijanis themselves. For this reason, before the Iranian army launched its attack on Azerbaijan, armed groups organized by regime-backed landowners, plainclothes police, and gendarmerie forces were deployed ahead of the army.

Additionally, to place the blame for the planned genocide on Azerbaijanis, the Iranian state appointed Azerbaijani-origin commanders, such as Colonel Hashimi, to lead the Iranian army attacking Azerbaijan. This issue was openly acknowledged in the memoirs of Colonel Zangeneh, the deputy commander of the invading Iranian army (Zanganaeh, 1325). Meanwhile,

Tehran radio and newspapers referred to the armed groups organized by the Iranian state for genocide, as well as the regime's plainclothes officers and gendarmerie commanders, as "Iranian patriots." Their primary function was to work alongside the landowners' organized militias to cleanse Azerbaijan of democrats and create a grand welcoming ceremony for the "victorious army of the Shah." Thus, a campaign of massacres, looting, and genocide was initiated in Tabriz and other cities of Azerbaijan (Farzad, 1386). However, all these acts of genocide and crimes were systematically carried out under the direct orders of Iran's Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Mollazadeh, 1376). At the same time, after organizing and dispatching its agents to Azerbaijan, the Iranian state used Tehran radio to announce the movement of the Iranian army toward Azerbaijan, issuing continuous calls to punish and exterminate en masse the members of the Democratic Party, those involved in the establishment of the National Government, Azerbaijani nationalist forces, and their relatives. This not only encouraged the armed individuals trained and sent to Azerbaijan for genocide but also incited criminals who were always seeking opportunities to massacre innocent civilians and plunder their wealth (Dehqan, 1348). The Iranian state allocated and spent 1,250,000 tomans to fund the sabotage, genocide, and espionage activities of the armed groups it had organized in Southern Azerbaijan (Mociri, 1970). The mass killings carried out by the Iranian state's military, plainclothes gendarmerie, and armed groups organized by regime-affiliated landowners and agents in Southern Azerbaijan between 1946 and 1947 were systematic. The planned nature of these massacres, the indiscriminate extermination of supporters of the Democratic Party and innocent civilians without trial, aligns with all the articles of the Genocide Convention and confirms that these acts constituted mass genocide (Soyqırım, 2025). The first instance of genocide committed by the Iranian state and its organized armed groups in Southern Azerbaijan took place in the city and province of Zanjan. This province was handed over to Iran as part of an agreement between the Azerbaijani National Government and Tehran, with a commitment to prevent any bloodshed. According to the agreement, the Tehran regime was allowed to send only 300 gendarmes into the region. However, as soon as the city was vacated by the Azerbaijani fedaees, the Iranian army—equipped with artillery, tanks, and armored vehicles—entered Zanjan, accompanied by armed criminal groups organized and armed by the Iranian state (Alizadeh, 2014). Furthermore, in an attempt to deceive the international community and facilitate the massacre, the Pahlavi regime loaded a grain train with weapons, artillery, military equipment, and soldiers and sent it to Zanjan. Using these forces and equipment, and in direct violation of agreements with the Azerbaijani National Government,

they subjected innocent civilians to genocide. As Pishavari himself noted, the democrats had made significant concessions to avoid fratricide, yet the Iranian regime exploited these agreements to carry out mass killings.

The Iranian army and its armed allies, including the armed groups organized by landowners like Zulfighari under the orders of the Pahlavi regime, showed no mercy in Zanjan—even to infants. After killing them, soldiers and militias would kick their lifeless bodies around like footballs. The armed groups organized by the Iranian state, along with the Iranian army, looted at least 200 houses in Zanjan. Several nearby villages, including Dizej, Tarim, and Qaraboshlu—where many of the residents had been active in the ranks of the fedaees—were burned and destroyed (Ərdəbilian, 1981). The looting of homes by Iranian forces was carried out with such brutality that in one case, an infant was accidentally wrapped inside a stolen carpet and later suffocated to death. The child's tragic fate was only discovered later when the carpet was unrolled (Alizadeh, 2014). The Iranian army and gendarmes exhibited extreme cruelty toward innocent Azerbaijanis. In one particularly horrifying incident, gendarmes in Zanjan stripped a 21-year-old Azerbaijani girl naked and paraded her through the streets. When she tried to resist and, exhausted, sat on the ground, they repeatedly stabbed her while pulling her up by her hair, forcing her to continue walking (Alizadeh, 2014). Religious figures who refused to submit to the central government were also brutally massacred by the Iranian army, gendarmerie, and regime-organized armed groups. Among those executed in Zanjan were clerics Mohammad Ali Ali Ishaq and Sheikh Mohammad Ali (Ərdəbilian, 1981). Although an agreement had been reached between the Azerbaijani National Government and the Iranian state to peacefully transfer control of Zanjan and halt the conflict, the Tehran regime violated the agreement. With support from U.S.-supplied aircraft, it launched aerial bombings on Azerbaijan. Afterward, ground forces advanced, accompanied by the armed militias of landowners like Zulfighari, who attacked the city of Miyana. There, they massacred civilians, looted their properties, and arrested many, subjecting them to execution and imprisonment. (Alizadeh, 2014). Alongside Miyana, the town of Kagizkonan was also occupied and plundered. Its residents faced mass killings and arrests at the hands of the Iranian regime's forces. In an effort to prevent any massacres and acts of genocide, the leaders of the Azerbaijani National Government declared an end to hostilities with the Iranian army as it entered Southern Azerbaijan. In fact, the Governor of Azerbaijan, Dr. Salamullah Javid, and the head of the Azerbaijani Provincial Assembly, Haji Mirza Ali Shabistari, sent telegrams to Iran's Prime Minister Qavam al-Saltaneh, assuring him that there would be no resistance against the Iranian

army and that its security would be fully guaranteed. Additionally, S. Javid and M. Shabistari personally traveled from Tabriz to Basminja to welcome the approaching Iranian army. In an attempt to prevent armed groups from committing massacres, *“S. Javid even went to meet Brigadier General Hashimi, the commander of the invading Iranian forces, in Bostanabad, 63 kilometers from Tabriz”* (Farzad, 1386, p. 254). However, since the Iranian state’s actual objective was to carry out a large-scale genocide through its organized armed groups, the army’s advance into the central and interior regions of Southern Azerbaijan was deliberately delayed for several days. Understanding this plan, S. Javid wrote in his memoirs:

“On the evening of Azar 21 (December 12), Shabistari and I arrived in Bostanabad. General Hashimi assured us that the troops would reach Tabriz within a few hours. Another day passed, but the army did not arrive. Later, I realized that this delay was part of a premeditated plan to allow state-backed militias and trained criminals to exterminate the democrats before the army’s arrival. The military, in turn, was meant to be portrayed to the public and the world as the 'liberating' force that had put an end to Azerbaijan’s national struggle. For over 48 hours, I did everything in my power—at the governor’s office, in the streets of Tabriz, and at the most dangerous hotspots—to prevent the expansion of massacres, looting, and violence. Even now, when I recall those days, I become emotional and deeply shaken. On Azar 22 (December 13), I returned to Bostanabad, informed the army commanders of the situation, and pleaded with them to intervene. Once again, General Hashimi reassured me and sent me away. I sent another telegram to Qavam, urging the army to come quickly and rescue innocent people” (Cavid, 2003, p. 90).

However, the course of events proved that these telegrams were futile, as the Iranian state had already planned the genocide through its organized militias. In reality, *“the central government’s army had deliberately delayed entering Tabriz. The main purpose of this delay was to allow the monarchist forces, pre-trained and sent to Azerbaijan, along with special armed gangs, to carry out massacres, organize mass looting, and exact revenge on the participants of the national movement”* (Rəhimli, 2003, p. 150).

After the massacres and genocidal acts perpetrated by Pahlavi regime's agents and the forces it organized and sent to various cities in Azerbaijan, the Iranian army finally entered Tabriz at 16:00 on December 13, 1946. *“By this time, the city had already been flooded with the blood of innocent people by pro-monarchist elements and bandit groups”* (Rəhimli, 2009, p.173).

With the entry of the Iranian army into Tabriz, it was expected that the large-scale massacres and looting, carried out by the forces organized by the Pahlavi regime for the purpose of genocide, would finally subside. However, “the looting and terror did not stop. On the contrary, reactionary circles became even more savage.” During a meeting with the Soviet Union’s Consul General, Krasni, General Hashimi promised that the security of Soviet institutions in Tabriz would be guaranteed. He further claimed that he was authorized to ensure order during the elections, but regarding other matters, he had not received any instructions. Despite this assurance, the military quickly took control of the city. A military field court, which had been prepared in advance, began operating (Həsənli, 2001). Thus, despite all agreements and precautions, the Pahlavi regime, with its widespread genocidal plan, occupied Southern Azerbaijan and subjected its innocent population to genocide (Alizadeh, 2014). After the occupation of Tabriz, General Zangeneh was appointed as the governor of Tabriz. He ordered the burning of a young child of one of the freedom fighters by throwing them into an oven. Tabriz quickly turned into a camp. The prisons were filled with innocent civilians, and due to overcrowding, the freedom fighters and innocent people were executed in groups by firing squads. Within a few days, more than 3,000 freedom fighters and innocent civilians were executed in Tabriz. Every day, dozens of innocent Azerbaijanis died in prisons from hunger, cold, and torture. Azerbaijan's prosecutor, Firudin Ibrahim, and many other fighters were hanged. The freedom fighters who resisted until the last shots at the Firdovsi school in Tabriz, finally, to avoid surrendering, threw themselves into a well (Alizadeh, 2014). In a few days, tens of thousands of people in Tabriz were subjected to genocide, exile, imprisonment, and plunder. *"760 people were executed by military field court orders, and thousands were killed without trial by the gendarmerie and 'Iranian patriots' (one report states that in just a few days, their number reached 3,022 – C.H.)..."* (Həsənli, 2001, p. 539).

Due to the overcrowding in prisons, innocent people who were detained were executed without trial. The streets of Tabriz were filled with the corpses of Azerbaijanis who had been victims of genocide. Iqdam newspaper reported that the streets and gutters in Tabriz were filled with dead bodies. Blood flowed through the city, while in Tehran, the regime was celebrating this crime. At the city gate of Tabriz, regime gunmen shot Dr. Baqiri, a doctor. In the Qonga neighborhood, when regime gunmen attacked the house of a freedom fighter, the wife of the man took out the Quran and threw herself in front of them. However, they ignored her and dragged the freedom fighter away. His 13-year-old daughter ran after them, crying and begging, but they killed the freedom fighter in front of her and then raped the young girl (Farzad, 1386).

General H. Fardus, the head of Iran's Security Department, who visited Azerbaijan, wrote in his memoirs about what he witnessed in Tabriz: *"Armed men were capturing and executing Pishavari's supporters. The bodies of those executed were visible on the sides of the streets. Their number was about 2,000-3,000"* (Alizadeh, 2014, p. 211).

The armed groups and the army organized by the Iranian government showed no mercy, even to children, killing them brutally in the cities of occupied Azerbaijan. At the same time, many Azerbaijani artists, painters, poets, and others were also subjected to brutal massacres. (Alizadeh, 2014) In Basminca, located near Tabriz, the head of the freedom fighter Ali Qahramani, who had been awarded the 21 Azar medal, was decapitated and displayed on a spear (Alizadeh, 2014).

Undoubtedly, these atrocities and barbarities were carried out with the protection of the Iranian army. One might wonder, wasn't this mass killing and plunder enough? Why did they not stop persecuting the population? These questions remained unanswered. The elders and community leaders of the city gathered in the governor's office in an attempt to stop the massacre, but no one heeded their words. Haji Mirza Ali Shabestari, while explaining the scale of the crimes, noted that some of those present could not hold back their tears. He said, *"Where in the world are unarmed civilians massacred like this, and their homes plundered? They show no mercy to anyone or anything..."* (Farzad, 1386, p. 275).

The Iranian army carried out one of the most brutal massacres and genocides in the history of the Ahar and Qaradag regions. In these areas, the forces organized by the Iranian government to commit genocide, including the gendarmerie in civilian clothes and the Iranian army, not only carried out mass executions, but also dismembered many of the population, and in some cases, such as in the village of Motalig, which supported the National Government, they tied a father and son to a tree, poured oil over them, and burned them alive until they turned to ash. (Alizadeh, 2014). As the Iranian army and its organized armed groups launched attacks on South Azerbaijan from three directions, advancing towards Ardabil, they committed massacres and plunders along the way. Initially, in December 1946, hundreds of people were executed without trial by the armed groups organized by the Shah regime in Ardabil, and their bodies were left under the snow. Here, based on fatwas issued by government-affiliated mullahs, the blood of Azerbaijanis, especially those close to the Azerbaijan National Government, was declared permissible, and they were killed on the spot without trial. In many cases, even those with no affiliation to the National Government were also executed. For instance, in Ardabil, the authorities mistakenly identified a man known as "Daraqchi," a seller of combs, as a member

of the opposition group (Firqeh), and executed him. It was later discovered that he had no connection to the group at all (Alizadeh, 2014). After the Shah's forces captured Ardabil, on December 24, 1946, in just one of the villages in the Nir region of Ardabil, six innocent villagers with no ties to any political group were executed without trial (Farzad, 1386). In Ardabil, the streets were covered with a layer of ice stained red with blood, as the bodies of the victims were dragged across the snow. After these atrocities carried out by the Iranian government's civilian-dressed gendarmerie and its organized armed groups, the Iranian army, one week later, on December 21 (Azar 12), entered Ardabil from the direction of Qaflanti Mountain, continuing their massacres and plundering (Alizadeh, 2014). Massacres continued throughout the cities, towns, and villages of South Azerbaijan. In the village of Sumirin, located near Ardabil, 17 innocent residents were lined up and shot en masse at a place called Agadeyirmani, without any judicial process (Farzad, 1386). In Sareyn, just a week after the Iranian army's occupation, members of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party and those close to them were all executed. In just the Saridere area of Sareyn, 110 innocent Azerbaijanis were brutally shot (Alizadeh, 2014). The armed groups organized by the Iranian government and the state army also wreaked havoc in the city of Sarab and surrounding villages. In Sarab and its villages, fighters were captured and killed, and homes were looted and set on fire. According to official documents, 156 people were captured in Sarab (Alizadeh, 2014). However, unofficial sources indicate that the number of those captured was even higher. In the villages, the population was massacred without trial. In Sarab's Senziq village alone, six individuals were executed without any credible evidence or trial by the Shah regime. Official reports claim that 24 Azerbaijanis were hanged in Sarab. Furthermore, dozens more innocent Azerbaijanis were hanged in the following months, with four people executed every morning in Sarab (Alizadeh, 2014). The city of Urmia also fell victim to the brutal attacks of the Iranian state's armed groups and the Iranian army. In this city, the Shah regime's collaborators and those it organized, including Haji Mirza Gholam Fiqhi, Dr. Afshari, Dr. Soleiti, Haji Nusrat Nizam Ahmadi, Ahmad Torabi, Hossein Lotfi, Gholam Intizami, Hamid Agazadeh, Mujahid Barzgar, Hossein Barzgar, Rashid Qareli, and other members of the opposition, were arrested and executed without trial (Dehqan, 1348). Their homes were looted. Of the arrested party leaders, 89 were taken outside the city to Chuxur Baghcha and executed (Kavianpur, 1378). In the city of Maragheh, many innocent people also fell victim to massacres. The Tehran-based newspaper Ettelaat reported on December 16, 1946, that Iranian military vehicles had been deployed to collect the bodies of those executed in the streets (Alizadeh, 2014). In addition to those massacred, many Azerbaijanis were accused of

collaborating with the Democratic Party and were hanged, while numerous others faced imprisonment or exile.

The forces organized by the Iranian regime and the Iranian army also committed unimaginable crimes and genocide against innocent Azerbaijanis in the city of Khoy. Many of the victims' bodies were piled one on top of the other on Shahpur Street, above the Qirq Pilleh spring, while others were taken and dumped in the Taza village area (Alizadeh, 2014). Ahmad Sai, a professor at Tehran University, recalled in Khoynegar magazine that he witnessed three supporters of the National Government being sacrificed as a part of a welcome ceremony for Iranian officers entering the city of Khoy. At the time, Sai was a schoolboy and remembered seeing bodies falling from the first army truck. He counted 19 bodies in total (Rahmani, 2022). After the occupation of South Azerbaijan by the Iranian army, unimaginable crimes were committed by the regime's organized forces and army in the surrounding towns and villages of the city of Marand. Many innocent civilians were massacred, and several members of the political party, including one police officer, were burned alive in the streets. Some people were killed, and their bodies were hanged in the streets (Alizadeh, 2014). Furthermore, 62 activists of the National Government were arrested and executed in military tribunals (Alizadeh, 2014). As in other Azerbaijani cities, in Marand too, along with the massacres, the properties of the population were looted. In the villages of Marand, many innocent people were massacred, including seven individuals who were killed in the Aradeyirman area (Alizadeh, 2014). In other cities of South Azerbaijan, including Khalkhal, Mugan region, Salmas, Maku, Khoy, Gosha Chay, Shabestar, and Astara, as well as nearby towns and villages, innocent civilians were captured by the forces organized by the regime and the Iranian army, and either massacred, executed, imprisoned, or exiled. In Maku alone, 15 people were arrested, and many others were killed.

Overall, by December 18, 1946, the Iranian army had occupied all the cities of South Azerbaijan and established a military training ground in these areas (Zanganeh, 1325). Based on documents from 1946, calculations show that the number of people executed exceeded 25,000 (according to a French newspaper, the number was 20,000) (Rəhimli, 2003). Thus, after the Pahlavi regime reoccupied South Azerbaijan in December 1946, it carried out horrific massacres in the region.

2. Deportation of the Population after the Reoccupation of South Azerbaijan in 1946

After South Azerbaijan was reoccupied in December 1946, the Pahlavi regime not only carried out genocide, arrests, and looting but also deported a significant portion of the

population to areas in southern Iran that were unsuitable for habitation. During the deportation period, many Azerbaijanis lost their lives due to the harsh heat, hunger, disease, and other hardships. The U.S. Herald Tribune newspaper reported on the deportation of the population from South Azerbaijan after 1946: "Iraqi authorities, fearing a new rebellion in Azerbaijan, deported thousands of people to southern Iran on suspicion of communist activity. Many people were arrested daily in Tabriz, temporarily gathered within the walls of Haji Ferec Bagh, and sentenced by a six-member court. By the beginning of September, 4,000 people had been deported by this method. Police officials estimate that another 4,000 people will be deported to southern Iran in the next six weeks (Malju, 1400).

In addition to the mass massacres and executions in Tabriz, it was reported that *"3200 of those arrested were held in Azerbaijan, while the rest were sent to other prisons in Iran, and 8000 people were deported to southern Iran, where they perished due to hunger and thirst"* (Həsənli, 2001, p. 539).

In the city of Ardabil, in addition to the mass killings, 500 people were arrested and thrown into prisons. Many Azerbaijanis were executed, while others were exiled from their homeland (Alizadeh, 2014). A group of Azerbaijanis who were deported to Daraba in southern Iran wrote a letter to the governor of Fars province, complaining that they could not endure the hunger, unemployment, and extreme heat, and pleaded to be allowed to return to their homeland (Malju, 1400). In the city of Khoy, in addition to the mass executions of the population, many were also arrested and deported to areas such as Kerman, Sirjan, Fasa, Neyriz, and Shiraz (Alizadeh, 2014). The Pahlavi regime even transferred Azerbaijani prisoners to prisons in southern Iran, where the unbearable heat was a form of torture in itself, aiming to end their lives. Many Azerbaijanis, who were unjustly sentenced to life imprisonment, were sent not to Azerbaijan, but to Bandar Abbas. Due to the extreme climate conditions, it was reported that they could not survive, and they perished in these harsh conditions, as reported by Herald Tribune (Malju, 1400). In Tabriz, the regime's forces looted the homes of the population, transporting their belongings in 10-ton trucks to the house of Colonel Shaghaqi, who had turned it into his headquarters. The residents were killed and their bodies dumped in cemeteries (Alizadeh, 2014).

The Pahlavi regime did not limit itself to executions, arrests, and deportations; it also plundered the property of the people. In a secret letter from the Head of the Finance and Economics Department of Azerbaijan to the Iranian Ministry of Finance in 1947, this process was described as follows: *"All properties of individuals associated with the Azerbaijani*

Government during its one-year period have been completely confiscated and handed over to the army by the central government. This applied to rebels, migrants, and those who had fled, including those living in Iran and holding Iranian citizenship. All movable and immovable property of the rebels and their collaborators, as well as property in towns and villages, including household items, were seized and confiscated" (Vezarate Darai, 1326).

After the reoccupation of Southern Azerbaijan, the officials of the Pahlavi regime even resorted to extortion to seize the wealth of those who had no collaboration with the Azerbaijani National Government. For example, a merchant from Maragheh, who had no connection to the National Government, was summoned by the authorities and asked for a bribe of 3,000 tuman. When he refused, they had a decision made in the first instance of the court against him. The authorities then raised the bribe demand to 12,000 tuman, threatening him with a decision in the higher court if he did not comply (Malju,1400). According to documents from 1946, estimates show that nearly 100,000 people were deported, while more than 20,000 individuals managed to escape persecution and sought refuge in foreign countries (Rəhimli, 2003). Additionally, other reports indicate that the Iranian state deported 36,000 more people to regions of Iran that were unsuitable for habitation. It is also noted that 70,000 people sought refuge in the Soviet Union (Alizadeh, 2014).

3. The Cultural Genocide Committed by the Pahlavi Regime in Southern Azerbaijan in 1946

The Iranian state's genocide against Azerbaijanis was not limited to physical destruction; it also involved a broader, more insidious form of cultural genocide. As one historical account describes, *"The people who saw their honorable sons hanged from the gallows also witnessed the burning of books written in their native language under those very trees" (Fərzanə, 1999, p. 36).*

In all cities, textbooks, books, newspapers, and journals written in Azerbaijani Turkish were forcefully collected and burned. After the invasion of Azerbaijan by the Iranian Shah's army and the collapse of the Azerbaijani National Government led by statesman Pishavari, all books, publications, and written materials were gathered and burned in several locations in Tabriz and other cities of Azerbaijan. The organizers and executors of these book burnings were Iranian government officials and representatives of the victorious occupying army. The burning of Turkish books was an unprecedented act in history, aimed specifically at erasing the cultural heritage of a nation by destroying works written in its language (Əlizadə, 2017). As one account mentions, *"The burning of books in Tabriz was so extensive that thick smoke could be seen*

rising from all parts of the city for hours. On that day, several young Turkish men were hanged in Danışsara Square, and according to some claims, several teachers were thrown alive into the fire and burned. In Tabriz, Urmia, Zanjan, Ardabil, and other places, many intellectuals and activists who opposed the burning of books printed in Turkish had their homes and families burned” (Alizadeh, 2014).

The burning of works in the Azerbaijani language was not limited to Tabriz alone; it took place across all cities in Southern Azerbaijan. Dr. Ahmad Sai, in an interview with Xoynigar journal, shared his experiences of witnessing the burning of books in Xoy city: “ *I was receiving my primary education at a two-class school on Shahr bani Street. I was in the first grade during the rule of the Democratic Party. Our books were in Turkish, and the teacher taught us spelling in Turkish. It was December of 1946. The principal instructed that all of our books be brought to the school. They piled the books one on top of the other, set them on fire, and burned them. As a child, I was happy both because I could play with the fire and because I wouldn't have to do homework anymore” (Sai, 1391, pp. 8-9).*

The Pahlavi regime showed no mercy even to the teachers who were instructing in the Azerbaijani language. “After the invasion of Azerbaijan and the burning of books written in the Azerbaijani language, Azerbaijani language teachers were arrested and imprisoned. Among these teachers, the most famous was Gəncəli Səbahi, who was exiled to southern Iran after his arrest. In Ardabil, Seyid Ali Qareşizadeh was martyred in exile. In other cities of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani language teachers were also arrested and thrown into prison. For instance, in Merend, Azerbaijani language teachers were arrested and imprisoned (Əlizadə, 2017, p. 301)

The Pahlavi regime, upon reoccupying Southern Azerbaijan, targeted not only the population but also the entire cultural, scientific, and educational institutions. “*In addition to the burning of books in Tabriz, the newly established Azerbaijan University was also destroyed by the invaders” (Alizadeh, 2014, p. 189).*

The invaders also set fire to the Philharmonic, the Majlis Library, the theater center, and the building of the National Orchestra in Tabriz (Əlizadə, 2017). The university, which had faculties of medicine, agriculture, and pedagogy, was raided by the Iranian army, and its laboratories and libraries were plundered (Alizadeh, 2014). With the suspicion of printing books in Turkish, the Pahlavi regime had “*the Jowdat printing house in Ardabil, equipped with modern printing presses for that time, plundered and burned by soldiers attached to the army” (Əlizadə, 2017, p. 295).*

Gendarmes, murderers, and bandits sent from Tehran, under special permission from military commanders, completely stripped the population of their safety, committing murder, looting, and assault. They even damaged the city's infrastructure and beauty. The Azər Cinema, which had been built by the Azerbaijan National Government, was destroyed, as well as the asphalted streets, which had been paved by the Azerbaijan National Government (Cami, 1362). After the reoccupation of Southern Azerbaijan by the Pahlavi regime, all newspapers published in Azerbaijani Turkish, including "Azerbaijan", "Shefeg", "Gunesh", "Medeniyyet", "Yumrug", "Democrat", and "Yeni Shefeg", were shut down (Alizadeh, 2014, p. 195) . Following the reoccupation of Southern Azerbaijan on December 12, 1946, the Pahlavi regime banned the Azerbaijani language across the entire region. The Tabriz radio station ceased its broadcasts in Azerbaijani Turkish and began airing programs in Persian. The goal behind these actions was to forcibly assimilate the Azerbaijani Turks as a nation and erase their identity through Persianization. The number of victims of this cultural genocide has surpassed the number of victims of physical genocide and currently reaches into the millions.

Conclusion

In 1946, after the Pahlavi regime reoccupied Southern Azerbaijan and overthrew the Azerbaijani National Government, it carried out a horrific genocide against the Azerbaijani Turks in order to crush the movement once and for all. Over 30,000 Azerbaijani Turks, including those affiliated with the Azerbaijani National Government, its officials, and their families, fell victim to this genocide and massacre. Many of those who survived the massacre were deported to Iran's southern regions, mostly areas unsuitable for living. The majority of them lost their lives due to the harsh conditions in these regions. Moreover, after the reoccupation of Southern Azerbaijan on December 12, 1946, tens of thousands of people were subjected to severe torture and imprisonment. At the same time, the Azerbaijani language was once again banned in Southern Azerbaijan. All Turkish books, newspapers, and written works were gathered from homes and burned. Tens of thousands of people fled to the Azerbaijan Republic, which was part of the Soviet Union, or were forced to emigrate to foreign countries. In short, following the collapse of the National Government, the Pahlavi regime, backed by Persian chauvinists, committed terrible genocide and military crimes in Southern Azerbaijan.

References

- Alizadeh, H. (2014). Hokumate Melli-ye Azerbaijan- Moruri bar ruydadhaye salhaye 1324-1325 Azerbaijan ve naslkoshi-ye 21 azer. Elektron nashr. (In Persian).
- Cami, N. (1362). Qozashte cheraghe rahe ayande. *Entesharate Qoqnus*. (In Persian).

Cavid, S. (2003). *O günün həsrəti ilə (xatirələr)*. Yurd nəşriyyatı.

Dehqan, A. (1348). *Sarzamine Zardosht Rzaiye*. Entesharate İbn Sina.

Ərdəbilian, L. (1981). *Fədailər Azərbaycan xalqının 21 Azər nehzətində (1324-1325)*. Azərbaycan ruznaməsinin nəşriyyəsi.

Əlizadə, H. (2017). *21 Azər soyqırımı (1946-1947-ci illərdə Cənubi Azərbaycanda kütləvi qırğınlar)*. Elm və Təhsil nəşriyyatı.

Farzad, Sh. (1386). *Ferqe-yi Demokrat-i Azerbaijan az takhliye-yi Tabriz ta marg-i Pishavari*. Entəşarahe Ohedi. (In Persian).

Fərzanə, M. (1999). Gnüey Azərbaycanda 1945-46-cı illərdə milli maarif tərəfindən nəşr edilən dərslər kitabları haqqında. *Tribun* № 4.

Həsənli, C. (2001). *Güney Azərbaycanda Sovet-Amerika-İngiltərə qarşılıqlı 1941-1946*. Azərbaycan nəşriyyatı.

Kavianpur, A. (1378). *Tarikhe Urmiya*. Entəşarate Azarkohan.

Malju, M. (1400). *Kuch dar peye kar-o nan*. Entesharate Akhtar. (In Persian).

Mociri, C. (1970). *21 Azər nehzətinin 25 illiyinə həsr edilmiş bədii bloknot, ADF Mərkəzi Komitəsinin Təbliğat Şöbəsi*.

Mollazadə, H. (1376). *Razhaye Sar be mehr- Naqoftehayə vaqaye-i Azerbaijan*. Entesharate Mahdi azadi.

Rəhimli, Ə. (2015). *21 Azərə gedən yol- Güney Azərbaycanda milli-demokratik hərəkət (1941-1946-cı illər)*. Araz nəşriyyatı.

Rəhimli, Ə. (2003). *Güney Azərbaycan Milli-demokratik hərəkəti (1941-1946)*. Meqa nəşriyyatı.

Rəhimli, Ə. (2009). *Seyid Cəfər Pişəvəri – mübarizə burulğanında keçən ömür*. Nurlar nəşriyyatı.

Rahmani, B. (2022). Bisto yeke azar ruze koshtare mardome azarbaijan tavassote arteshə shahanshahi bud na na ruze najate Azarbaijan - <https://ufp-iran.org/9380/>

Sai A. (1391). Man, kuaki va anche be cheshme khod didam. *Khoynigar*, № 6, Tehran.

Səfəri, B. (1362). *Ərdəbil dar Qozargah-i tarix*. (C. III). Ərdəbil Entəşarate daneshgah-i Azad. (In Persian).

Soyqırımı cinayətinin qarşısının alınması və ona görə cəzalandırma haqqında. Konvensiya. (2025). https://genocide.preslib.az/az_s17.html

Vezerate Darai. Nameye mahramaneyeye modir-i koll-i darai va eqtesadi-ye ostane Azerbaijan be vazir-i darai be shmareyi 490/5. (In Persian).

Zanganeh, A. (1325). *Khaterate mamuriyyathaye man dar Azerbaijan az shahrivar-i 1320 ta dey 1325*. Entesharate Sharq. (In Persian).