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## Deportations of Azerbaijanis From West Azerbaijan and the Concept of Return

### Abstract

Throughout history, people around the world have encountered a variety of challenges, including tragedies and natural disasters that have affected multiple generations. One of them is the deportation of some individuals. For nearly two centuries, Azerbaijanis were first incorporated in Russia, then exiled as part of the Soviet empire. The worst part is that it is illegal to discuss it until Azerbaijan regains its independence. For the interest of justice, we should emphasize that several study works on those who were oppressed during the Soviet era have recently been published in Russia. However, the realities of Azerbaijani deportation from Armenia are not mentioned in the works of Russian researchers. This indicates that we have not been able to fully communicate such truths to the international community. First, Azerbaijanis were gradually evicted and deported from the land of modern-day Armenia in the years 1905-1906, 1918-1920, 1948-1953, and 1988-1991. At the same time, several of them, particularly the elderly and children, died as a result of the severe conditions of relocation, unexpected temperature change, bodily shocks, and spiritual agony. As a result, Armenian nationalists conducted a systematic and deliberate genocide and expulsion of Azerbaijanis who were densely inhabited in the territories.

**Keywords:** Western Azerbaijan, Deportation, Ethnic Cleansing, Return

## Batı Azerbaycan'dan Azerbaycanlıların Sınırdışı Edilmesi ve Geri Dönüş Kavramı

### Öz

Tarih boyunca, dünyanın dört bir yanındaki insanlar, birden fazla nesli etkileyen trajediler ve doğal afetler de dahil olmak üzere çeşitli zorluklarla karşılaştı. Bunlardan biri de bazı bireylerin sürgün



*edilmesidir. Yaklaşık iki asır boyunca Azeriler önce Rusya'ya dahil edildi, ardından Sovyet imparatorluğunun bir parçası olarak sürgüne gönderildi. Adalet adına, Sovyet döneminde baskıya uğrayanlar hakkında son zamanlarda Rusya'da birkaç çalışma yayınlandığını vurgulamalıyız. Ancak Rus araştırmacıların eserlerinde Azerbaycanlıların Ermenistan'dan sürgün edilmesine ilişkin gerçeklerden bahsedilmemektedir. Bu durum, söz konusu gerçekleri uluslararası topluma tam olarak aktaramadığımızı göstermektedir. İlk olarak, Azeriler 1905-1906, 1918-1920, 1948-1953 ve 1988-1991 yıllarında bugünkü Ermenistan topraklarından kademeli olarak tahliye ve sürgün edilmişlerdir. Aynı zamanda, birçoğu, özellikle de yaşlılar ve çocuklar, tehcirin ağır koşulları, beklenmedik sıcaklık değişimi, bedensel şoklar ve manevi ıstırap nedeniyle hayatını kaybetti. Sonuç olarak, Ermeni milliyetçileri sistematik ve kasıtlı bir soykırım gerçekleştirmiş ve bu topraklarda yoğun olarak yaşayan Azerbaycanlıları sürgün etmişlerdir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Batı Azerbaycan, Tehcir, Etnik Temizlik, Geri Dönüş*

### **Introduction**

The issue of deportation that people encounter is one of the world's continuous concerns. Due to the awful actions of particular states, the legal criterion of forcible deportation of an ethnic community from its traditional place of residence became extremely relevant in the twentieth century. Deportation or forced migration of the population was a type of political repression used in various methods during Soviet administration. This ethnic cleansing activity should be classified as political repression, both because it is administrative in nature and because it affects just one of Armenia's peoples, the Azerbaijanis. The denationalization of a society that had been built demonstrated the brutal, anti-humanist nature of this activity. Regardless of the magnitude, shape, and execution mechanisms of deportations, they are targeted at the destruction of morality, human dignity, and human values. Wars and deportations aiming at forcibly changing people's centuries-old culture, traditions, religion, and language constitute crimes against humanity.

It is sufficient to highlight that several research works have recently been published in Russia about the peoples who were oppressed during the Soviet era. However, the realities of Azerbaijani deportation from Armenia have yet to appear in the works of Russian researchers. The writers, who meticulously investigated the history of persecution and deportation of peoples during Soviet administration, discovered that 110 deportation operations took place on USSR territory. However, the facts of our Armenian countrymen' expulsion are not included in this list. This signifies that we have yet to transmit our truths to the rest of the world. Armenians' lies are everywhere (Nazim, 2009, p. 6). More than 20 individuals were forcefully transferred in the Soviet Union between the 1930s and the 1950s. Koreans, Germans, Ingrian Finns, Karachais, Balkars, Kalmyks, Chechens,

Ingush, Crimean Tatars and Ahiska Turks, Odessa-region Bulgarians, Greeks, Romanians, Kurds, Iranians, Chinese, Hemshils, and others are among them. In the USSR, seven of them were denied territorial-national autonomy (Deportatsiya azerbaydzhantsev iz Armyanskoy SSR v 1987-1990 godakh. Dostupno po adresu <http://samella.ru/publ/azerbajdzhan/politika>).

During the Great Patriotic War, deportations were largely carried out. Representatives from some countries were suspected of being potential Nazi comrades-in-arms, while others were accused of assisting the enemy. As a result, the Volga Germans were labeled as prospective "traitors" in 1941 (Qafqaz deportasiyalar, 2018). Their autonomous country was dissolved, and the vast majority of its inhabitants were relocated to the Kazakh SSR. All Crimean Tatars were transferred to the Uzbek SSR in May 1944. Among the reasons for the move were their mass desertion from the ranks of the Red Army during the Great Patriotic War, as well as their active participation in the formations of the German army, police, and camp apparatus. Historians estimate that more than 6 million people were deported between 1930 and 1950 (Deportatsiya azerbaydzhantsev iz Armyanskoy SSR v 1987-1990 godakh. Dostupno po adresu). Azerbaijanis were forcibly removed and deported from today's Armenia in 1905-1906, 1918-1920, and 1948-1953. Simultaneously, some of them died, particularly the old and babies, because they were unable to survive the hard conditions of relocation, unexpected climatic change, bodily shocks, and spiritual agony.

Tsarist Russia established the "Armenian State" at the beginning of the nineteenth century (after the signing of the Gulistan Treaty in 1813 and the Turkmenchai Treaty on the division of Azerbaijani regions between Iran and Russia in 1828) with the goal of creating a buffer zone in the historic Azerbaijani lands. 300 years ago, Russian Emperor Peter I, contemplating the future contours of the empire, instructed messengers dispatched south: "*We should try to deceive them (Armenians) and tempt them to our lands so that Russia becomes a fortress*" (Makhmudov and Shukrov, 2005). In the first part of the nineteenth century, around 300,000 Armenians from Iran and Türkiye were relocated to Azerbaijan and established in Iravan, Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhchivan, Zangezur, Darelayaz, Ordubad, Vedibasir, and other locations (Bayramov, 2015).

### **1. Literature review**

For many of the people who have been subjected to this injustice, deportation issues and procedures reflect one of the most painful chapters in their past. One of the worst things that the Azerbaijani people have gone through in their millennium is being deported on many occasions. The worst part is that although this process to which our people were subjected was repeated

numerous times over, there were variations in the attitudes toward them and the depth of the problem's investigation.

The deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical territories on multiple occasions in 1918–1920, 1948–1953, and 1988–1991 is documented in a number of collections of papers, statistical data, official decisions, and archival resources. It was released beginning with firstly, "Karabakh-real history, facts and documents" (Makhmudov and Shukrov, 2005). by Y. Mahmudov and K. Shukurov was published in 2007. A. Bayramov released "Our historical tragedies: deportation, repression and genocide" in 2015. It is also appropriate to highlight the publications listed (Bayramov, 2015). The aforementioned publications vary in their analysis of the processes that have occurred, their first-hand introduction of new facts into the scientific periodical, their clarification of points that have been previously published about them in specific cases, and their ultimate objective treatment of the issue.

The Moscow 2005 publication "Stalinskiye deportatsii 1928-1953" is replete with factual materials that contribute to a more realistic and objective historical investigation of the deportation history of not only the Azerbaijani people but also other peoples during the specified era (Stalinskiye depo 1928-1953 gg. Dokumenty, 2005). The collection includes dozens of Azerbaijan-related documentary items that have never been used before.

There are numerous collections of documents that provide the most accurate materials and facts among the specific details of the final phase of the Azerbaijani people's expulsion. The most significant of them, in our opinion, was released in 2013 and offers a good opportunity to examine the collective issue of "Deportation of Azerbaijanis from the Armenian SSR (1948-1953 years)" (Azərbaycanlıların Ermənistan SSR-dən deportasiyası 1948-1953-cü illər, 2013). In the realm of researching the deportation issue, we should highlight the significance of our historians' recent papers that have been published as stand-alone books, particularly in magazines and online databases. Several objective approaches to the topic are highlighted in the writings of A. Abdullayev (Abdullayev, 2022; Nazim, 2009; Nəcəfov, 2006; Moshkin, 2020). "Soviet Union: Last Years of Life" was released by R. Medvedev in 2010. Despite the grandiose promises of the Soviet national policy of genocide, the monograph "End of Soviet Empire" interprets the concrete facts about the tragic consequences of the Azerbaijani deportation, with the exception of a few points that have not been accurately verified until the very end (Medvedev, 2010). In spite of this, the issue of the deportation of Azerbaijanis during World War II, the causes of the infringement of

associated plans, official papers, and specific facts were almost ever addressed in this book or in any other research that has been published to date.

In addition, it is also necessary to note the works of the author and the importance of various articles on Internet sites, which provide specific facts about individual stages of deportation (Erməni cinayətləri: Soyqırım. Deportasiya; Paşayev, 2013; Armano-azerbaydzhanskiy konflikt. Adres druzhby). Some of these articles are written on the basis of documentary materials, others - on the basis of archival materials and confirmed official facts. They are united by the fact that they are based on rich factual material about the deportation process. For this reason, one of the main objectives of the study is to analyze those processes and events that have not yet been covered in the scientific cycle, based on comparative and critical analysis. When writing the article, priority was given to the study, comparison and analysis of primary sources, documentary materials that were not cited in the commented literature and remained outside the scope of the study until now.

### **1.1. Research methods**

During the study, several methods were used to collect and systematize a large amount of materials. Such important methods as the study, analysis and synthesis of specialized descriptive literature, archival documents on the topic of the study were used. In addition, in order to study the nature of the problems posed in the study, a comparative and critical analysis of events and facts was carried out, generalizations were made, the principle of scientific objectivity, an integrated approach to the study of data and historicity was observed. At the same time, an independent attitude was expressed to all the issues studied. The study of all these above-mentioned issues in a systematic-comparative form, their explanation and presentation in historical-chronological order and, finally, the achievement of specific results increases the value of the study.

### **1.2. Research design**

First, the title of the article is determined, and the issues that are of interest to the study and will be analyzed in its course are highlighted as a separate heading. As one of the most important preliminary tasks in the course of the study, the available literature close to the topic was studied. At that time, the academic level, novelty and reputation of the literature used in the scientific world were taken into account as one of the main criteria used in assessing the quality of research. Then a number of documentary materials and information on the topic were collected, the first sources and main official documents were identified. The results obtained at the analysis stage were processed in a chronologically correct form and presented at the end. They tried to prove the importance of these results through scientific research.

Particular attention was paid to maintaining objectivity at all stages of the research process.

### **1.3. Methods of analyzing research material**

When writing the article, the method of historical comparison was used more widely. The article was written taking into account historical authenticity, scientific objectivity, and a systematic approach. When describing historical facts and processes, a system of general scientific and historical approaches was used, such as clarification, research, analysis and synthesis.

Also, logic and history of issues were used to correctly highlight the problems, and the method of comparative analysis was used. In addition, it was considered appropriate to widely use the statistical method. Then similar and different features of different stages of the deportation of Azerbaijanis were discussed. In preparing the article, the historical-typological research method was also used and the indicators of the main features and results of the deportation process were interpreted.

## **2. Genocide or deportation**

As is well known, towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, as a result of the Russian Empire's military advance in Transcaucasia, a portion of Azerbaijan's ancestral regions came under the jurisdiction of the Russian crown under the Republic of Armenia. The War of Conquest ended with Russia signing two treaties: one with Iran on February 10, 1828, and another with Türkiye on September 2, 1829. These documents actually allowed Russia to relocate around 8,000 Armenian families from Iran and 14,000 from Türkiye to freshly acquired territory (Kakoy iz nikh: genotsid ili deportatsiya? Adres druzhby). Statistical data included in the annual editions of the Caucasian calendar also demonstrate that a substantial number of Azerbaijanis live in the territory occupied by the Republic of Armenia; in certain places, the latter population outnumbers the Armenian population. Thus, in 1886, 149 of 326 villages in Yelizavetpol governorate's Zangezurs region were Azerbaijani (45.7 percent), 91 were Kurdish (27.9 percent), and just 81 (24.8 percent) were Armenian (from there).

The population of Azerbaijanis in Erevan province ranged from 661.6 thousand to 270.4 thousand (41 percent) in 1891. Their population steadily increased, reaching 276 thousand in 1893 and becoming in 1897. According to this census, the Zangezur region's population exceeded 142 thousand people, with 71.2 thousand (50.1 percent) Azerbaijanis and 63.6 thousand (44.8 percent) Armenians (from there). Although the ratio of Azerbaijani and Armenian population in these territories had shifted slightly as of January 1, 1916, the majority of Azerbaijanis remained in the Zangezur district (119.5 thousand people, or 53.3%) (from there).

### **3. Another stage in mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia**

The Armenians' intentions to build a mythical "Great Armenia" were the fundamental motive for the genocide and deportation of the Azerbaijani inhabitants of Armenia in 1918-1920. The priority desire for territory acquisition and the artificial expansion of ethnic territory, the sense of cultural superiority, and unique rights to the residential area became popular in the Armenian setting. Armenian chauvinists felt that "Greater Armenia" could not be imposed by the majority of the population, but rather by force of arms, blood, and iron buried on piles of rubble and innocent deaths of "foreigners." It was planned that the future state's territory be purged of Muslims. The sneaky plot to establish a residential region for "Greater Armenia" in Ottoman Türkiye and the South Caucasus in 1918-1920 was initially linked to the inevitability of a severe conflict and the slaughter of the Muslim people.

Armed to the teeth, Armenian detachments retreated with the Russian army that had departed the Caucasus front and carried out a series of operations, having gained extensive expertise in exterminating the Turkish-Muslim people in Eastern Anatolia during the First World War. Armed operations were launched at the start of 1918 to rid Iravan province of its Muslim population. It is necessary to read the "List of devastated and abandoned residents of Muslim villages in Iravan province until March 1918" to have a sense of the degree of violence against the Muslim people (Bayramov, 2015). This list comprises the names of 199 villages in the Iravan governorate's districts of Iravan, Surmeli, Echmiadzin, and Novobayazet that were destroyed by Armenian armed organizations and were thus abandoned by the Muslim population. At the same time, Armenians utilized physical destruction of civilians, massacres, atrocities, intimidation, and panic stories to drive the local population to leave the areas where their grandfathers and great-grandfathers had resided for ages. As a result, Armenians' tight residential centers were artificially built, which increased and expanded with the migration of Armenian refugees from Türkiye.

In 1891, the population of Azerbaijanis in the Iravan governorate increased by 41%, from 661.6 thousand to 270.4 thousand. Their population grew significantly, reaching 276 thousand in 1893 and nearly 313 thousand in 1897. According to the census, the Zangezür district had a population of over 142 thousand people, with 71.2 thousand (50.1 percent) Azerbaijanis and 63.6 thousand (44.8 percent) Armenians.

During the last two months of 1919, Armenian armed organizations regularly burned 62 Etchmiadzi villages, 34 Surmeli villages, and all Muslim villages in the Iravan district (save Zangibasar). As a result, at the end of 1919, there were 200 thousand refugees from the burned

Muslim villages of Novobayazet, Iravan, and Etchmiadzin regions (Osnovnyye etapy proizoshedshey deportatsii azerbaydzhantsev iz Armenii. Adres druzhby). In general, he demonstrated with his own eyes that throughout the Republic of Ararat's existence from 1918 to 1920, Armenian politicians formed governmental power not to control the country, but to eliminate the Muslim population and grab their property. These incidents demonstrated unequivocally that the Armenians, who pride themselves on their "civilization" and "ancient history," are simply not mature enough to run their own state, let alone rule over other nations. Despite the fact that Armenians were relocated to our ancient areas, the number of Azerbaijanis in these territories was more than the number of Armenians. In 1866, for example, just 81 of 326 villages in the Zangezur district were Armenian. Azerbaijanis made up 66% of the population in the Iravan district, while Armenians made up 34% (Makhmudov and Shukrov, 2005). To establish Armenian domination in these lands, a genocidal program was implemented against Azerbaijanis, Armenians were secretly armed by Tsarist Russia, and armed groups were formed. Following the foundation of Soviet rule in Armenia, the Armenian authorities took deliberate steps to remove Azerbaijanis and take their territories. The communist administration provided numerous opportunities for Armenians to take over Azerbaijan's territories in a so-called democratic manner. Armenian nationalists' actions to expand their territory at the expense of the Republic of Azerbaijan were carried out behind closed doors, with the help of the Armenian lobby in Soviet Russia.

#### **4. Concerning the forgotten deportation or forcible displacement of ethnic Azerbaijanis from Armenian SSR territory between 1948 and 1953**

In modern Russia, little nothing is known about the history of the deportation of ethnic Azerbaijanis from Soviet Armenian territory at the whim of the Stalinist government in the late 1940s. Even "Stalin's Deportations," edited by A.N. Yakovlev and giving the most thorough depiction of Stalinist ethnic deportations, was published in 2005. "From 1928 to 1953," the authors of the primary publication avoided this topic (Stalinskiye depo 1928-1953 gg. Dokumenty, 2005). It appears that everyone has forgotten, but it is nothing less than the forcible relocation of more than 250,000 members of a distinct nation - Azerbaijanis - on ethnic grounds (Stalinskiye depo 1928-1953 gg. Dokumenty, 2005). Yes, they were not accused of collaborating with the fascist invaders, as was the case at the end of the war against, say, Chechens, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, and other tiny peoples, which became a statutory cause for not forcibly deporting them to remote regions. In this scenario, Azerbaijanis were not "punished" for assisting the occupation, and their resettlement took place some years after the war ended. By the way, this was the fundamental



reason why this deportation was forgotten. Simply put, in the last stages of World War II, I.Stalin desired to redraw the political geography of the USSR, including Transcaucasia, and enlarge it at the expense of neighboring republics, particularly Iran and Türkiye.

However, it was discovered that almost 250,000 Azerbaijani refugees had unintentionally become hostages of these expansionist schemes (Stalinskiye depo 1928-1953 gg. Dokumenty, 2005).

### **5. This was the root of the problem**

The USSR Council of Ministers resolved on December 23, 1947, *"on the transfer of collective farmers and other Azerbaijani population from the Armenian SSR to the Kur-Araz plain of the Azerbaijan SSR"* (Bayramov, 2015). The seizure of commercially, socially, and spiritually developed Azerbaijani communities of strategic importance by Stalin drew special attention from Armenians. As a result, in the first stage, Azerbaijanis were transferred from settlements near Iravan (now Iravan), and subsequently people of district centers, neighboring villages, and cities were relocated. Because some of the deported population came from Armenia's hilly regions, adjusting to the climatic conditions of the Kura-Araz plain was challenging. As a result, tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis who were relocated to the Kura-Araz plain died in large numbers. On the other side, no Azerbaijanis resettled in Armenia were permitted to enter Nagorno-Karabakh. Simultaneously, from 1947 to 1953, steps were launched to change the names of Azerbaijani communities, close educational and cultural institutions, and merge regions.

The Soviet Union's thesis of goodwill to unify this long-suffering people inside the territory of the USSR as a whole underpinned the propaganda campaign performed overseas to entice Armenians to return to their historical homeland. In fact, more acreage was required. The impending 350-400 thousand repatriates, which the Soviet leadership hoped for, needed to be regulated in some way. This was incredibly challenging given that Armenia has no fertile land and that neighboring Türkiye allegedly owns Armenian property. As a result, the Stalinist leadership felt confident that they would be returned. Despite considerable diplomatic pressure and a show of force, Moscow was unable to restore the lands sought by Türkiye. The Kremlin's aspirations to expand Soviet boundaries at the expense of Türkiye quickly fell apart. In World War II, the USSR's territorial ambitions generated considerable tension with its former allies, and in many ways, the Cold War began.

However, a fresh catastrophe occurred: all plans for the relocation of overseas Armenians to the USSR were predicated on Türkiye's purchase of the former Russian Empire's lands. Without

them, the repatriates would have had nowhere to live. As a result, it was agreed that the arriving foreign Armenians would be put on the territories of the ethnic Azerbaijanis who had been in Armenia since ancient times, and that the Azerbaijanis themselves would be deported to Azerbaijan. In other words, the question of Armenian repatriate resettlement was handled by the eviction of Azerbaijani families from their lands.

On December 23, 1947, the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR made another decision “The transfer of collective farmers and other Azerbaijani population from the Armenia SSR to the Kur-Araz lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR” and on March 10, 1948. I. Stalin signed both documents (Azərbaycanlıların Ermənistan SSR-dən deportasiyası 1948-1953-cü illər). The expulsion of Azerbaijanis was based on a fictitious desire of Armenians living in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East to return to their motherland. The displacement of the Azerbaijani population from Armenia considerably eased the acceptance and settlement of Armenians from other countries. As a result, buildings and residential buildings vacated as a result of the resettlement of the Azerbaijani people were used for the resettlement of Armenians from abroad, according to the regulation.

Azerbaijanis were effectively stripped of all immovable property, including private apartments and lands inherited from their fathers and grandfathers. Regardless, the data reveal that the projected number of Azerbaijani families could not be resettled in Armenia within the time limit specified. As a result, on September 6, 1950, the USSR Council of Ministers issued a new decision entitled "On relocation to the collective farms of the Kur-Araz lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR in 1951-1955." This directive mandated the removal of 15,000 collective farm families and other Azerbaijani residents from the Armenian SSR within a certain time frame (Osnovnyye etapy proizoshedshey deportatsii azerbaydzhantsev iz Armenii. Adres druzhby). The choices made by the USSR leadership about the resettlement of Azerbaijanis provided an opportunity for the Armenian authorities to remove the Azerbaijani towns around Iravan off the map once and for all along Armenia's boundaries.

Following I.Stalin's death in 1953, the intensity of the relocation of Azerbaijanis from Armenian land gradually decreased. On the one hand, this was owing to the Soviet authorities failing to meet the established period and number of plans for Azerbaijani resettlement, and on the other side, it was due to a substantial fall in the number of Armenians who wished to change. The fundamental reason is that, due to the severe social and economic conditions they encountered in Soviet Armenia, they imagined living comfortably enough in the West. Even as the relocation drive waned in intensity, the gradual and slow movement of Azerbaijanis who sensed the full extent of

their second-class status in Armenia became unavoidable and gradually took the form of a permanent trend until the collapse of the USSR. In reality, more than 90 thousand migrants were drawn to live in Soviet Armenia, and since 1949, the repatriation of Armenians to Soviet Armenian territory has been officially halted by a decision of the USSR Council of Ministers (Nazim, 2009). On July 9, 1948, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR, T. Guliyev, sent a letter to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, V. Molotov, regarding the implementation of those decisions. In it, he complained that the preparations for the resettlement of the people were inadequate and that most Azerbaijanis reside in Armenia's mountainous regions. He suggested moving to three groupings of districts with favorable natural climates, strong economic prospects, and an urgent demand for workers, and explained why:

1. To the western Kura-Araz lowland regions, such as Gasim Ismayilov, Safaraliyev, Tovuz, Gazakh, and Agstafa regions (to enable the quick development of agricultural, cotton cultivation, and animal husbandry).

2. The districts of Khachmaz, Devechi, Khudat, Gusar, and Guba (to provide the city of Baku with fruits and vegetables).

3. Gadabey to the Zagatala, Gakh, Nukha, Vartashen, and Gutgashen districts (to improve potato output) (for the growth of agricultural and animal husbandry) (Nazim, 2009).

The USSR Council of Ministers, however, disregarded T. Guliyev's plea.

The displacement (deportation) of Azerbaijanis from their historical ethnic areas in the territory of present-day Armenia has been overdone, according to studies on the Council of Ministers of the USSR resolution dated December 23, 1947. In spite of the fact that the decision was made with the intention of relocating 100,000 Azerbaijanis from 22 regions of Armenia, it was carried out violently, and almost 250,000 Azerbaijanis were expelled from 24 provinces, the city of Iravan, and more than 200 towns (Osnovnyye etapy proizoshedshey deportatsii azerbaydzhantsev iz Armenii. Adres druzhby). With the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev's Decree, which was issued on December 18, 1997, the deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia between 1948 and 1953 received political and legal analysis for the first time. The decision made it clear that, in addition to the USSR's leadership and the Armenian chauvinist circles' illegal policies, the then-government of Azerbaijan, whose actions ran counter to the interests of its people, played a significant part (Nazim, 2009). Decisions No. 4083 dated December 23, 1947 and No. 754, dated March 10, 1948, both of which were signed by I. Stalin, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, "On the Transfer of Collective Farmers and Other

Azerbaijani Population from the Armenian SSR to the Kur-Araz Plain of the Azerbaijan SSR" The most unjust action taken by the Soviet government against our people was a true policy of repression (Erməni cinayətləri: Soyqırım. Deportasiya). The attitude toward this topic was altered by the great leader Heydar Aliyev's analytical evaluation of events, his capacity to draw conclusions from them, and his ability to take the appropriate actions. Heydar Aliyev signed a proclamation on December 18, 1997, ordering the "mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical-ethnic territories in the territory of the Armenian SSR in 1948-1953. The wrong done to our people in the Caucasus during the eras of Tsarist Russia and Soviet authority was evaluated politically in this proclamation. According to the proclamation, "Our people have undergone tremendous privations, national tragedies, and sufferings as a result of the program of ethnic cleansing and genocide carried out against Azerbaijanis in the Caucasus in the last two centuries. Azerbaijanis were forced out of the region that is now known as Armenia, where they had lived for thousands of years, and were subjected to mass killings and massacres. Thousands of historical-cultural monuments and settlements that belonged to our people were also destroyed as a result of this step-by-step inhumane policy (Paşayev, 2013). The leaders of Azerbaijan were strongly criticized for their attitude toward the fate of their people during those years as well as for their involvement in the planning and carrying out of crimes against our compatriots, in addition to the criminal policy of Armenian chauvinist circles and the leadership of the former USSR against our people.

#### **6. Deportation's final phase**

The most recent expulsion of Azerbaijanis from the Armenian SSR has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Few people are aware that between 1987 and 1990, roughly 200,000 Azerbaijanis were driven out of Armenia. Currently, the almost 200,000 Azerbaijanis who were expelled from the Armenian SSR are all but forgotten. However, from 1987 to 1990, the Azerbaijani population of the Armenian SSR was the target of ethnic cleansing. This article merely makes an effort to introduce the general public to the compiled information (Makhmudov and Shukrov, 2005). In the late 1980s, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Province, which was formed from Azerbaijan as part of the Azerbaijan SSR (DQMV) in 1923, and its Armenian SSR took advantage of the weakening of the central government of the USSR. These Armenians were represented in the leadership of the Soviet Union, the Armenian SSR, and the Armenian diaspora abroad. They made deliberate preparations to join the The Azerbaijanis who continued to reside on Armenian territory up until 1988 did so in close quarters (Medvedev, 2010). However, the Soviet

authorities did not provide autonomous status inside the Armenian SSR to regions heavily populated by Azerbaijanis, unlike Armenians living in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The systematic "Turkless Armenia" policy was put into effect in January 1988. Under the direction of the Soviet authorities, the Armenian government, the "Karabakh" and "Krunk" committees, and officials of the Etchmiadzin church carried out thousands of brutal expulsions of Azerbaijanis. Undisputed facts demonstrate that at the end of 1987, in the Gafan region of the Armenian SSR, the horrific final deportation of Azerbaijanis from their ancestral lands began. Azerbaijanis living in various cities and areas of Armenia in 1988–1989 anticipated the same level of attention. Over 250 000 Azerbaijanis living in Armenia were violently driven from their historic homes; 216 of them were cruelly murdered, and 1154 others suffered injuries (Armano-azerbaydzhanskiy konflikt). They were compelled to seek sanctuary in Azerbaijan in order to escape the wrath of the Armenians.

In contrast to the deportations in 1948–1953, the last and most catastrophic deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia occurred in 1988–1991 and was particularly cruel because it occurred at the start of the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict. Peasants who were forced to flee their own lands, including pastures, fields, gardens, and meadows, where their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers had toiled for decades, made up the majority of the Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia. Only a small portion of our compatriots who were evacuated from Armenia lived in Iravan and other small industrial cities. They spent a lot of time living next to the Armenians as an incomplete minority, which made the Azerbaijanis stand up. They also knew the Armenian language and spoke it as fluently as they did their native Azerbaijani language, despite feeling like second-class citizens in Armenia and foreigners among Armenians. However, Armenians frequently accuse them of being "Turks" from abroad (Nazim, 2009). Following the start of the deportation, numerous Azerbaijani delegations from various regions of Armenia and thousands of ordinary citizens petitioned higher authorities, party and government leaders, worriedly informing them about the cases of violence and illegality against them and pleading with them to stop them. The Soviet leadership made decisions in situations where the USSR Constitution was flagrantly violated on a large scale based on the assumption that the political process could only be effectively stopped by punishing the leaders of specific businesses, ministries, and law enforcement agencies. The substance of the decisions made by the top leadership in Moscow was unequivocal evidence that the central government consistently adhered to the principle of assigning conflict parties equal responsibility in all dire circumstances, regardless of who started the conflict and where the initial

flows originated (Nazim, 2009). Moscow miscalculated the tragedy's humanitarian and political repercussions, which were a foregone conclusion for all residential areas where Azerbaijanis and Armenians coexist. These incidents demonstrated that, regardless of the Soviet leadership's intentions, the process became out of control and resulted in increasingly violent protests because of the parties' equal responsibility strategy and the ambiguity of its political and organizational efforts. On both sides, there is a rising mistrust of the central authorities as a result of the confrontation between the opposing parties.

As a result, the phenomenon of refugees has been a significant part of Azerbaijan's political and social life since 1988 and for a while before that. Up until the start of February 1990, 186,000 Azerbaijanis moved from Armenia to Azerbaijan, according to the State Statistics Committee of the Azerbaijan SSR. In actuality, this number was closer to 250,000. In August 1991, the final Azerbaijani immigrant left Armenia (Osnovnyye etapy proizoshedshey deportatsii azerbaydzhantsev iz Armenii. Adres druzhby).

### **7. The current situation of the deported peoples of the USSR**

Since the start of the wholesale deportation of civilians during the Second World War, more than 70 years have passed. However, mass deportations of entire populations began far earlier, almost as early as the American Civil War. So it would be more accurate to discuss the 90 years of unbroken state repression, ethnic cleansing, and prejudice against citizens and peoples. The majority of the former USSR's successor governments had some connection to the persecution and expulsion of its citizens.

The Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR " On the Recognition As Illegal and Criminal of the Repressive Acts Against People Subjected to the Forced Resettlement, and Ensuring Their Rights" was adopted on November 14, 1989, just before the USSR collapsed. The RSFSR's "On Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples" Law was enacted on April 26, 1991. Russia merely signed, but never ratified, the "the Agreement on the issues related to the restoration of the rights of deported persons, national minorities and peoples" " in October 1992 in Bishkek. Because of this, nearly 20 years after the fall of the USSR, the oppressed peoples still have not undergone full rehabilitation (Sovremennykh narodov SSSR. Dostupno po adresu). Because they were kept under the "makhvi" griffin, documents pertaining to the persecution and expulsion of Azerbaijanis from Armenia in the 1940s and 1950s of the 20th century were not studied during the USSR. In accordance with a declaration made by the USSR Supreme Soviet on November 14, 1989, and a special decision made by the USSR Council of Ministers, "On considering the repressive measures

against forcibly displaced peoples as illegal and criminal measures and ensuring their rights," In that declaration, the practice of forcibly uprooting entire populations was strongly denounced as the gravest transgression of international law and the socialist system's humane principles. It was also deemed necessary to take the necessary legislative actions to restore the rights of all oppressed people. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR decided to reinstate the oppressed peoples' legal rights by resolution dated March 14, 1991. However, in the aforementioned papers, the names of Azerbaijanis who were expelled from Armenia were not listed among those expelled (Nazim, 2009). Therefore, neither the historical wrong committed against our people nor the right of our compatriots who were expelled from Armenian lands to return to their historical homeland was recognized. This resulted from the leadership of the former USSR's bias against the Azerbaijani people.

The fact that their rights have not been restored, are not respected, and are still being violated is evidence of the contemporary status of the oppressed peoples of the USSR in the independent republics of the CIS in the post-Soviet region. The issue itself is still not well understood. The problem's solution has not yet been fully translated into real estate policy at the practical level. The established international experience on respecting and restoring the rights of genocide victims, as well as ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities, does not logically or practically address this issue. The issue hasn't really been resolved from a political, administrative, economic, social, cultural, or other angle. Returning deportees and their children to their original homes has proven to be a very difficult procedure that has even encountered opposition from the local populace and authorities. Not all of the former local national-territorial and national-state associations have been reinstated. There has been no compensation for the significant harm the state inflicted on peoples and individuals while the communist government was in place. They undermine. More than 50 years after the post-Stalinist political rehabilitation process began, it is clear that the process of rehabilitating and restoring everything lost by the oppressed peoples and those who suffered political repression as a result of deportation and repressive state is a systematic one. Resolution of the policy is delayed and complicated. The situation has also come to a standstill due to the rise of bigoted, chauvinistic, and xenophobic emotions as well as the policies of the ruling elite. Unfortunately, while being the legal successors of the USSR, the CIS nations did not adhere to international legal standards regarding the protection of human rights, the rights of ethnic groups, and the rights of individuals, and they did not adopt a proper and dignified approach toward what happened to the deported people.

The Russian Federation's state institutions take no action to stop or punish the incitement-focused agitation and propaganda that is published in books, on the Internet, and in Russian mass media, as well as to stop the rehabilitation of oppressed individuals and those responsible. The Law of the Russian Federation "On the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples" absolves them of liability. Such punishments are not included in either the Code of Administrative Offenses or the Russian Federation's Criminal Code. One advantage should be mentioned here, though. Heydar Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, issued a decree on October 8, 1996, ratifying the agreement that was signed on October 9, 1992, in Bishkek, outlining our position on the issues surrounding the restoration of the rights of deported individuals, national minorities, and peoples (Soglasheniye po voprosam prekrashcheniya vosstanovleniya prav deportirovannykh lits, natsional'nykh men'shinstv i narodov, 1992). This demonstrated once more that Azerbaijan continues to uphold its duties in this area as well as other others.

#### **8. Ilham Aliyev proposed to develop the concept of return of Azerbaijanis to West Azerbaijan**

In his speech on December 24 to a gathering of intellectuals from West Azerbaijan, President Ilham Aliyev stated that, "I am sure that there will come a time when our compatriots from Western Azerbaijan, their relatives, children and grandchildren will return to our historical land, to Western Azerbaijan. I am sure that this day will come. I am sure the Western Azerbaijanis will return to their native lands with great desire and enthusiasm.", President Ilham Aliyev made reference to a crucial aspect of Azerbaijanis' nature when he announced the goal of our compatriots returning to Western Azerbaijan: their historical memory (Əliyev, 2022). Western Azerbaijan is our historical land, which is established by a number of historical documents, historical maps and our history itself. Unfortunately, as they did in Karabakh, the Armenians razed all our historical and religious monuments in Western Azerbaijan to the ground. They wanted to erase the historical heritage of the Azerbaijani people, but they failed. Because there is history, there are documents, and there are maps. The map displayed in this building, dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, once again shows that Western Azerbaijan is the historical land of Azerbaijan (Abdullayev, 2022). The names of cities and villages are of Azerbaijani origin, and we know perfectly well that the Azerbaijani people lived across present-day Armenia throughout history. The primary task now is to let the whole world know about that. Work in this direction has already started, but I am sure that the community will take on this matter in a more focused and result-oriented manner (from there).



### **9. İlham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan, advised taking the matter's legal aspect into account**

Regarding the legal aspect, we must collaborate and consult with foreign attorneys. The government of Azerbaijan would be helpful as well. They'll demonstrate to us how to exercise this desire and the right to go back in the global setting. The president of state believes it is essential to conduct an annual or every two years international conference on Western Azerbaijan in Baku and to take numerous steps to ensure that "this topic does not fall off the agenda, but on the contrary, it is brought to the agenda." Present-day Armenia is our land. When I repeatedly said this before, they tried to object and allege that I have territorial claims. I am saying this as a historical fact. If someone can substantiate a different theory, let them come forward (from there) (Əliyev, 2022). This call did not take long to arrive. The first step was the creation and unanimous approval of the Return Concept at the meeting of the Supervisory Board of the West Azerbaijan Community on January 26, 2023, which ensures the safe, honorable, and peaceful return of West Azerbaijanis to their ancestral country. The idea embodies the objectives and guiding principles of the West Azerbaijan Community's work toward the repatriation of West Azerbaijanis who were forcibly abducted from Armenian land.

The procedure of going back to Western Azerbaijan is actually quite lengthy. It requires the Armenian state's assurance in addition to the international one. The majority of our countrymen who were deported from those places had their homes, belongings, and civil recompense seized from them during that time. Therefore, the subject of restoring our compatriots' property rights is established in the Concept of Return to Western Azerbaijan. The concept also takes into account the problem of returning their lands to the locals. After our compatriots were forcibly relocated and taken from those places in the past 200 years as a result of ethnic cleansing, deportations, and genocides, the Armenians obliterated and destroyed any signs of Azerbaijan in those locations. Our monuments have been desecrated and their false toponyms modified. It is important to evaluate the state of our historical and cultural monuments in these places and to raise the topic of repair. The Concept of Return also takes into account the issue of where our compatriots will be transferred, the restoration of Azerbaijani names, and the return of the toponyms of those lands (Əliyev, 2022). All Azerbaijanis who were expelled from what is now Armenia's territory, as well as their descendants, have the right to go back. Their right to do so. Of all, given the disasters that have befallen us over the past 200 years, we have no faith in the Armenian government when it comes to security. As a result, the Concept specifies that an international security mission should be

dispatched to the regions where the return will occur with the proper mandate. Additionally, the Mission should be made up of the militaries of nations that Western Azerbaijanis see as reliable (Əliyev, 2022). In the framework used to formulate and maintain the mission mandate, our community should be included as a stakeholder. The Armenian government is accountable for all human rights abuses directed towards Azerbaijanis, all traumatic experiences we have had thus far, the violation of property rights, and the removal of the repercussions of those violations. The Armenian government should make sure that our property and community lands are returned, compensate us for property damage, cover all expenses associated with restoring Azerbaijanis' property rights, and take any other required actions. The deported Azerbaijanis will also require humanitarian aid immediately after their return, followed by reintegration and rehabilitation programs, as well as support for long-term social and economic growth. The neighborhood is committed to serving as a crucial ally in the implementation of pertinent projects in this field by donors and international organizations (Əliyev, 2022). In order to protect the interests, rights, development, and security of the Azerbaijanis residing there, the community will continue its activities as an organization even after Western Azerbaijanis return to their native country. To this end, it will engage in dialogue with the Republic of Azerbaijan, other nations and international organizations, as well as the government and people of Armenia. intends to carry on their shared endeavors. The West Azerbaijanis have been subjected to serious injustices, and we have gone through horrible catastrophes. This traumatic history will remain in our historical memory. At the same time, our community is aware that reconciliation is the best way to guarantee peace and progress. The people of West Azerbaijan are prepared to coexist peacefully and side by side with Armenians who have been repatriated from other nations. The Armenian government should also discontinue its programs and practices that foster animosity and prejudice against Azerbaijanis (Əliyev, 2022).

### **Conclusion**

The normative documents adopted at the time (all-Union significant normative and legislative acts, decisions of the Soviet government, the Communist Party, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Republic, and other executive decisions of the bodies, materials of the funds stored in the archives, etc.) must be considered in order to provide a legal and political assessment of this historical crime against the people of Azerbaijan, the ethnic cleansing action. Documentary film series should be made and broadcast to the world based on the sources kept in the State Film and Photo Document Archive and the testimony of live witnesses. The scientific-

research cycle on distinct elements should take into account the humanitarian catastrophe our countrymen are experiencing in the new settlement regions.

The time calls for the founding of an international organization to restore the rights of oppressed peoples. Look, despite the fact that more than 70 years have gone since the deportations, the issues facing the oppressed populations are not only unresolved but also, as the medical profession likes to say, "chronic"! A global organization would enable us to first coordinate our efforts in the fight for our own rights and, second, bring the issue of deported peoples to the attention of the international community. The international organization will keep a close eye on the current state of affairs for the oppressed peoples, allot resources to European human rights groups, and make proposals to EU institutions for the prompt restoration of historical memory and justice.

The problem of the deportation of Azerbaijanis during World War II was approached in our study in a completely different way than it had been in earlier historical studies; the positions accepted in scientific periodicals based on primary source materials were examined in a novel way; and the main points of the deportation plan's violations were made clear. It should be emphasized that this article represents the first time in a scholarly journal that our conclusion that M. Bagirov, the head of the republic, was significantly involved in the deportation plan violation has been published. The majority of historians argue that up until this point, the Soviet authorities had no formal records or intentions regarding the expulsion of Azerbaijanis. Nonetheless, the analysis of a few publications from that era as well as the consideration of prominent party and state officials' viewpoints enabled us to conclude that such a plan did exist in actuality in the current research. A thorough explanation of the various subjective and objective factors that contributed to the plan's non-fulfillment was provided throughout the article. To this extent, the present article can be regarded as the initial move in that direction.

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