



A “Frozen Conflict” Boils Over: Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023 and Future Implications

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Recommendations

1. HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

- The US has spoken about the deployment of an international monitoring mechanism, under UN auspices.
- This line of action should be pursued with a presence on the ground in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, facilitating the potential return of the refugees to their homes.

2. ZANGEZUR CORRIDOR

- The US could consider extending its diplomatic footprint in Armenia. More broadly, it should encourage continued engagement among the parties for a lasting transportation agreement within a wider peace deal.
- So far, this specific aspect of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations has been dominated by Russia, as well as Turkey and Iran. Beyond political arrangements, Washington, along with European partners, could offer technical border management expertise as an alternative or supplement to Russian oversight.

3. REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY DYNAMICS

- Currently, there is not much the US can do to influence a return to the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh before September 19, 2023. Going forward, US policies should instead concentrate on two things.
- First, the US should mitigate the risk of renewed escalation, specifically the possibility of Azerbaijani cross-border incursions, through a combination of diplomacy and threats of sanctions.
- Second, the US should facilitate integrating displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia through more humanitarian aid. These actions could be taken in concert with the EU, among others, to maximize their effectiveness.



4. RECOGNITION AND SELF DETERMINATION

- The US has called on Azerbaijan to uphold the rights and security of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh without any bias toward the unrecognized local authorities. With the implementation of an international monitoring mechanism as a guarantee, the human rights and cultural autonomy of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh could even serve as a precedent to resolving analogous conflicts in other parts of the world.
- The Azerbaijani government has offered such rights in principle, but its violent policies in practice instead led to the exodus of the Armenian population of the area. Moreover, the current pursuit of the former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh and the intention by the Azerbaijani government to conduct war crimes trials likewise undermines possibilities of future coexistence.
- The US and its allies and partners should support a return of the refugees and an amnesty deal within the broader goal of creating a stable atmosphere and enduring peace.

5. THE USE OF FORCE

- The US has a tangible security relationship with Azerbaijan and its partners. Disincentives could include sanctions, the prohibition of military aid, and an arms embargo in response to the use or threat of use of force. A congressional hearing in mid-November highlighted the position of the State Department that “business as usual” would be suspended with Azerbaijan, signaling possible policy shifts in this regard.¹

¹ Dovich, Mark. 2023. “‘No business as usual’ with Azerbaijan until progress on peace with Armenia, says US.” *CivilNet*, November 15, 2023. <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/757077/no-business-as-usual-with-azerbaijan-until-progress-on-peace-with-armenia-says-us>.