



### [Armenia and Azerbaijan Accuse Each Other of Ceasefire Violations in Nagorno-Karabakh](#)

Not long after agreeing to a ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh this past weekend, both Armenia and Azerbaijan accused each other of violating the terms and carrying out attacks on civilian areas. Continued fighting has escalated fears of a larger-scale conflict that could further involve regional neighbors such as Turkey and Russia. The ongoing clashes have also heightened concerns regarding the safety of civilian populations, not only in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh but additionally in nearby cities outside of but within close proximity to the region. Azerbaijan's second-largest city of Ganja for example, located approximately 60 miles from Nagorno-Karabakh, was subjected to missile attacks which resulted in civilian fatalities. As the dangerous recent flare-up of the decades-old dispute carries into its third week, the Minsk Group has called on Armenian and Azeri leaders to implement the ceasefire in order to prevent "catastrophic consequences for the region" and international aid groups warn of a deteriorating humanitarian crisis on the ground.

There are two major factors that have exacerbated this most recent series of armed attacks between Armenian and Azeri forces, and allowed it to devolve into the most serious fighting since the Nagorno-Karabakh War of the mid-1990s: advanced weaponry and external involvement. With respect to advanced weaponry, new developments in drone technology have played a discernable role. Azerbaijan for example has invested heavily in drone weaponry acquisition in preceding years, particularly through the purchase and licensing production of Israeli and Turkish drones. Around 60% of Azerbaijan's arms procurement comes from Israel, and data reports suggest that Turkey's military exports to Azerbaijan have risen substantially this year. Russia has also been a major weapons supplier to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, and has a defense pact with the latter. In addition to this, external involvement goes beyond the supplying of arms, with regional neighbors Turkey and Russia also being accused of deploying fighters during this period of the ongoing flare-up. Reports of foreign fighter fatalities have drawn concerns regarding how the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh could worsen with increased outside entanglement. The combination of the advanced weaponry and external involvement aspects is worrying and emphasizes the importance of quelling the clashes because subject analysts fear that the potential of a wider regional conflict is especially evident this time around.

For these reasons, a ceasefire was negotiated in Moscow last Saturday, and was reached in an effort to stop the armed attacks and allow forces from the two sides to exchange war casualties and prisoners. However, shortly after the arrangement was set to take effect, both contended that the other had committed violations – Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh claimed that Azerbaijan had launched a new offensive, while Azeri forces alleged that Armenia had begun shelling the former's territory. Merely hours following the agreement, Azerbaijan's second-largest city of Ganja – which is not far from but outside of Nagorno-Karabakh – was subjected to rocket fire. The shelling resulted in multiple civilian casualties, with at least 10 people killed and 35 others injured. The attacks were attributed to Armenian forces, and also destroyed thousands of houses and public buildings. Azeri officials pointed to the occurrence as evidence that Armenia was escalating the conflict and provoking its neighbor through the attack of a major city outside of the contentious region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh contended that they were targeting a military airbase in Ganja but had later stopped firing in order to avoid any civilian casualties. Due to the conflicting accusations being levied from both sides, Russia proposed the idea of dispatching military observers to monitor Armenian and Azerbaijani compliance with the terms of the ceasefire in one of the most recent developments this week.

In addition to the concerns regarding civilian safety, Azerbaijan has also accused Armenia of attempting to attack its oil and gas pipelines. These structures are prevalent in the area around Nagorno-Karabakh and provide a critical supply of these energy sources to both the regional and world market. The Caucasus region plays a major role in the global energy trade and the prospect of a prolonged conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan could have a devastatingly negative impact. Two pipelines carry oil and gas from Azerbaijan westward, and both pass near the volatile region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Thus, the unhindered passage of these is reliant upon the calmness, or lack thereof, of the situation in the territory.

Lastly, but most importantly, the ongoing conflict threatens to create a devastating humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding areas. The civilian death toll has disturbingly risen to over 30 in the contested region and over 40 in nearby towns and villages in Azerbaijan, with hundreds more wounded. Additionally, aid organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross have had difficulty conducting their operations due to the unsafe environment and continuing attacks. They have also projected that tens of thousands of local citizens will be in need of assistance over the coming months if the situation remains the same or degenerates further. Ultimately, in the absence of a cessation to the hostilities, the fighting has and will continue to force waves of people to leave their homes and livelihoods behind.