



[Clashes Between Armenia and Azerbaijan Continue as Both Sides Accuse Each Other of Attacking Civilian Areas](#)

As clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan stretch into a second week, it threatens to boil over into a full-scale regional conflict. The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh remains the setting of heavy fighting, and analysts have continued to warn of the repercussions of the ongoing violence. Armenia and Azerbaijan are engaged in a decades-long dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh that has been in place since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Both nations claim the region, which is governed and largely comprised of ethnic Armenians, but it is recognized internationally as part of Azerbaijan. The countries fought a war over the region in 1990, and the recent outbreak of fighting is the most serious violence to occur since. Additionally, civilian casualties have begun to mount, with each side blaming the other of recklessly endangering non-combatants. In turn, this threatens to create a refugee crisis as Azeris and Armenians alike flee their homes to escape the fighting.

Within the fighting, violence against civilians is of the utmost concern to the international community. Both sides have claimed the other is indiscriminately shelling civilian areas, and up to 75,000 people, or 50% of Nagorno-Karabakh's civilian population, has been displaced. Azerbaijan has also accused Armenia of using cluster munitions to bomb civilian areas. Cluster munitions are generally banned in areas of conflict due to their capacity to inflict massive collateral damage. Amnesty International later confirmed that Armenia had used cluster munitions, and called on both countries to become party to the international Convention on Cluster Munitions, which forbids them from being used.

The fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh also has the potential to become a wider regional conflict. Iran, Turkey, and Russia all have competing interests in the conflict, which are delicately balanced. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned that without a peaceful solution soon, the conflict could escalate quickly. International analysts have echoed this sentiment, particularly in the absence of the United States as a mediator. Turkey has been supporting Azerbaijan, and allegations have been levied against Turkey for providing improper backing. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that his country is only providing political support and weapon sales, but Turkey has been accused of transporting fighters from Syria to aid Azerbaijan, and also of carrying out airstrikes on Azerbaijan's behalf. Finally, Russia sells weapons to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, which puts it in a difficult position. Moscow has called for a ceasefire and voiced its concerns about foreign fighters flowing into the conflict. However, Russia and Armenia have a mutual defense pact which complicates the situation. Furthermore, with Turkey strongly supporting Azerbaijan, Russia is in a delicate position of not wanting to further strain ties with Ankara with the two still on opposite sides of other conflicts in Libya and Syria.

So far, Azerbaijan has rejected the idea of a ceasefire due to a feeling of being betrayed during the last ceasefire agreement, where it was promised additional territory that it never received. Now, the Azeri government is saying that it won't cease hostilities until Armenian forces leave Nagorno-Karabakh completely, which is highly unlikely to happen. Therefore, unless something drastic occurs, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan looks set to continue.