



Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

School of International Affairs

AZERBAIJAN IN THE WORLD **ADA Biweekly Newsletter**

Vol. 4, No. 10
May 15, 2011

adabiweekly@ada.edu.az

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AZERBAIJANI EUROVISION VICTORY PUTS BAKU IN A NEW LEAGUE

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The victory in this year's Eurovision song competition by two Azerbaijani singers and the award of next year's competition to Baku puts Azerbaijan in a new league, one that is attracting more attention to the country both welcome and not. Azerbaijanis both in their homeland and around the world celebrated this latest triumph of their country, a reality commentators there and elsewhere unanimously noted. But as often happens, some writers used this occasion as a peg on which to hang other stories about Azerbaijan, an additional reality with which Azerbaijanis are going to have to cope as their country assumes a higher profile.

Immediately after Azerbaijani contestants Ell and Nikki won the Eurovision Song Contest on May 14, Azerbaijani officials began making plans for next year's competition, which as a result of their victory will be held in Baku. Ismayil Omarov, the general director of Azerbaijani Public Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, said that he was "sure" that next year's competition will be "the most beautiful and grandest" in the history of the Eurovision movement.

Asked about reports that Armenian representatives will not take part in the competition, Omarov said that "if this is really so, then I regret it. Eurovision is a contest which encourages human values. We don't invite anybody separately. It is a very long process, there are very serious rules, and we observe these rules." He also suggested that journalists and others should end their speculation about how much money had been spent to boost Ell and Nikki. Such people are "bad losers," the Azerbaijani television and radio official said, and while he offered no precise figures, he said they were less than last year.

Instead of discussing these problems, Omarov suggested that people should "not focus on finance. This is a victory for Azerbaijani culture and music, for Eldar and Nigar [as Ell and Nikki are by birth]. They were considered the favorites, and this turned out to be right." They won after a long selection process rather than by any government machinations as some commentators have suggested, who have pointed to the overwhelming votes for them from Russian and Turkish jurors relative to their vote totals among other national groups.

That was certainly the message delivered by the two winners. Eldar Gasimov said that their victory was not a personal one alone, but a victory for "the entire Turkic world." And Nigar Jamal, having thanked their supporters, noted that she was "holding a Turkish flag in [her] hand," because "we were representing the entire world. It means that we really are one nation in two states."

Azerbaijani officials were equally enthusiastic. Ogtay Asadov, the speaker of the Milli Majlis, said that "the victory of our duo is the victory of the entire Azerbaijani people. I searched for Azerbaijan in Google and can say that Azerbaijan has gained a great deal of popularity. So many people have viewed the news about our country." And Ali Ahmadov, the executive secretary of the ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party, suggested that "Azerbaijan's Eurovision 2011 victory shows that ordinary Europeans are far less biased in their assessments [of Azerbaijan] than [are] European politicians," a reference to a recent European Parliament resolution criticizing Baku of violating human rights, intimidating journalists and harassing political activists.

Azerbaijanis are obviously proud that the Eurovision victory has put them in a new league, but they are clearly less comfortable with the reality than in that higher league, stories about anything concerning Azerbaijan—and as the parliamentary speaker pointed out, they are now more numerous than ever as a Google search shows—will become the occasion not only for spreading information about the country's successes but also for discussing shortcomings. That is a price well worth paying for being in the new league, but it is going to take some getting used to, especially among those who may feel that any criticism is an act of disloyalty.

WITNESSING THE WAR IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH: SHUSHA'S IDPS TESTIFY

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Those who were forced to flee their homes as a result of the Armenian occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory represent an important and as yet largely untapped resource of information about that conflict and the formation of ideas and identities of a far broader community about the war. To remedy this lacuna, I interviewed elderly Azerbaijani internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Shusha about their experiences, elderly now because all were 30 years of age or older when the conflict began in the late 1980s. This article provides some preliminary findings from that research.

By telling their stories, the Shusha IDPs are involved in constructing what scholars call "communities of memory." These communities of memory, or shared experiences, bind Karabakh IDPs across economic and geographical lines, but they are not monolithic. Instead, they vary at least somewhat along class, gender, generational, and location lines. In my conversations with them, I was especially interested in learning about the way in which the individual IDPs used their memory to give meaning to the traumatic and life-transforming events they experienced.

So far, I have conducted 84 interviews with Shusha IDPs, as part of a larger and continuing project on Oral History Archives of the Displaced Witnesses of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, Occupation and Displacement. In addition to these interviews, I employed a questionnaire to record characteristics such as personnel data (name surname, DOB, nationality, social origin, home town address, education and profession), as well as information on geography of settlement, deaths of relatives, adaptation processes, access to humanitarian aid, and their more general views on the conflict.

These voices to highlight the conflict and occupation from multiple sides go behind and beyond of an entire set of documentaries, archival pages, and published articles and books, to tell real life stories. With all their diversity, they are voices that, whether excited or sad, blame, demand, and call for justice. In almost all cases, those I approached were pleased to share their personal histories and memories of the conflict, something that they indicated gave them a rare chance to share their feelings with a larger public.

*Do not ask me, "Who I am: IDP or refugee!"
Do not ask me, "How are you doing?"
Just hug me warmly from all your soul
And do not ask me, "How are you doing!"*

-A Song Popular Among the IDPs

Despite the last line, I found they were willing to talk about that, especially as I myself was born and raised in Shusha before studying history in Moscow and then returning to Azerbaijan. Many of those with whom I spoke were very emotional

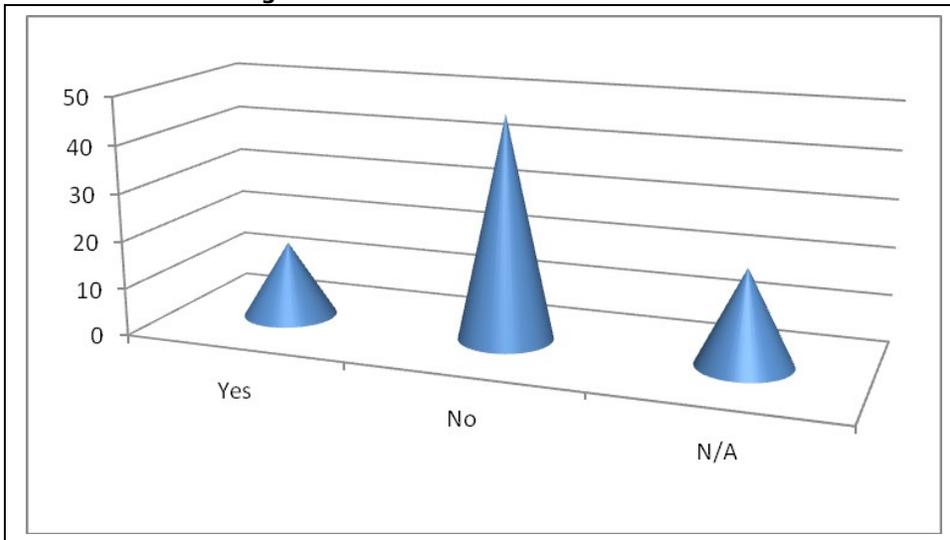
about what they had gone through but gradually calmed as they realized that our conversations were giving them a chance to create a historical record about the events of the past.

My very first respondent, a 65-year-old woman cried when I asked her to speak with me. "This is unbelievable," she said; "finally, [ordinary people are being asked] to give their opinion. We left our places almost 20 years ago, and nobody has bothered to ask us how we are doing, how we became IDPs, how we managed to survive. Every year, we hear officials talk about this on television and in the newspapers but now an ordinary old woman is being asked for her views." Other interviewees expressed similar feelings.

Another common theme running through all the interviews was a desire to "be back home" as soon as possible. Many cited the Azerbaijani proverb that "one can put a city in another city, but not a family into another one." And they often referred to their "stable" lives in Soviet times, a period when their relations with Armenians were not always bad. Indeed, positive feelings toward some Armenians have continued with respondents recalling that not all Armenians behaved badly toward Azerbaijanis.

Some respondents also noted that in their experience their Armenian neighbors were very sorry that the war had come and that the Azerbaijanis felt compelled to flee. But these same people noted that other Armenians had been actively involved in preparing for the violence, working with special organizations from abroad for "the sake of greater Armenia." Such people, respondents said, showed themselves very early in the conflict by providing Armenian forces with information about the strategic points in Azerbaijani cities. As far as a future in which Armenians and Azerbaijanis would live together again is concerned, most were prepared to live with their former neighbors but not with other Armenians who have moved in since the war began.

Table I. Distribution of Shusha IDPs' perspectives on the possibility of living together with Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh in the future

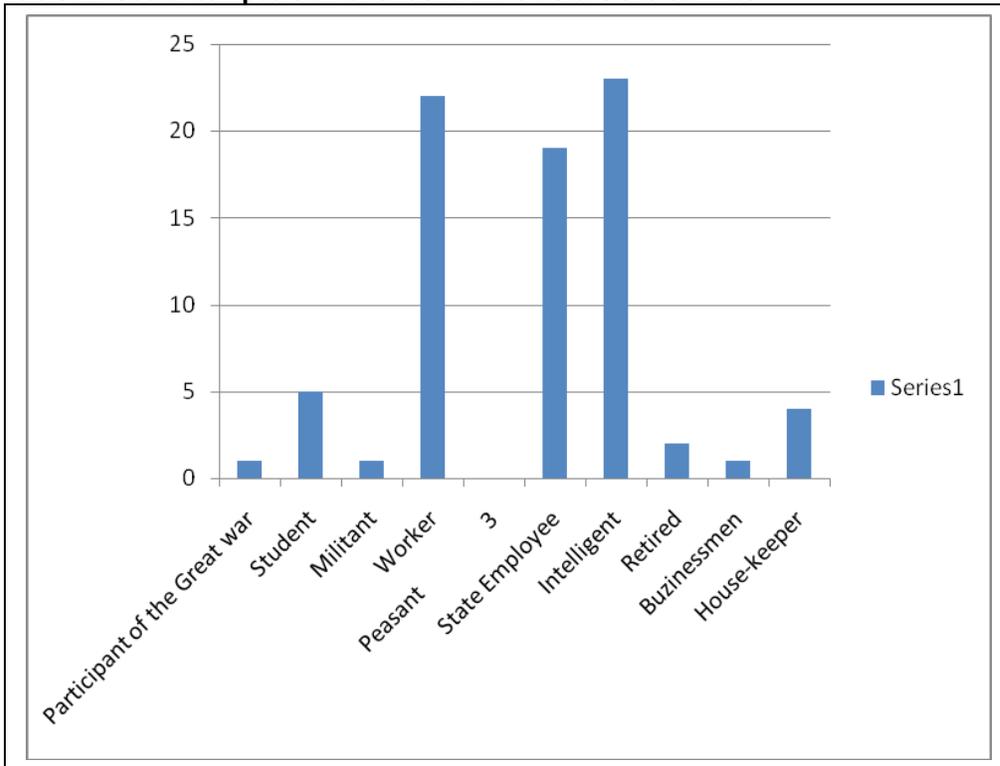


Perhaps the most moving testimonials concerned the sense among respondents that "time stopped" for them when Shusha was occupied on May 8. Azerbaijanis had begun to flee the city even before that because of rumors of an imminent air strike.

But the violence of that and the mass killings have left a deep impression in the minds of the IDPs. While they would welcome peace and a return to the *status quo ante*, they cannot forget and in most cases cannot forgive what happened. But some noted that among the victims were not only Azerbaijanis, but also Armenians.

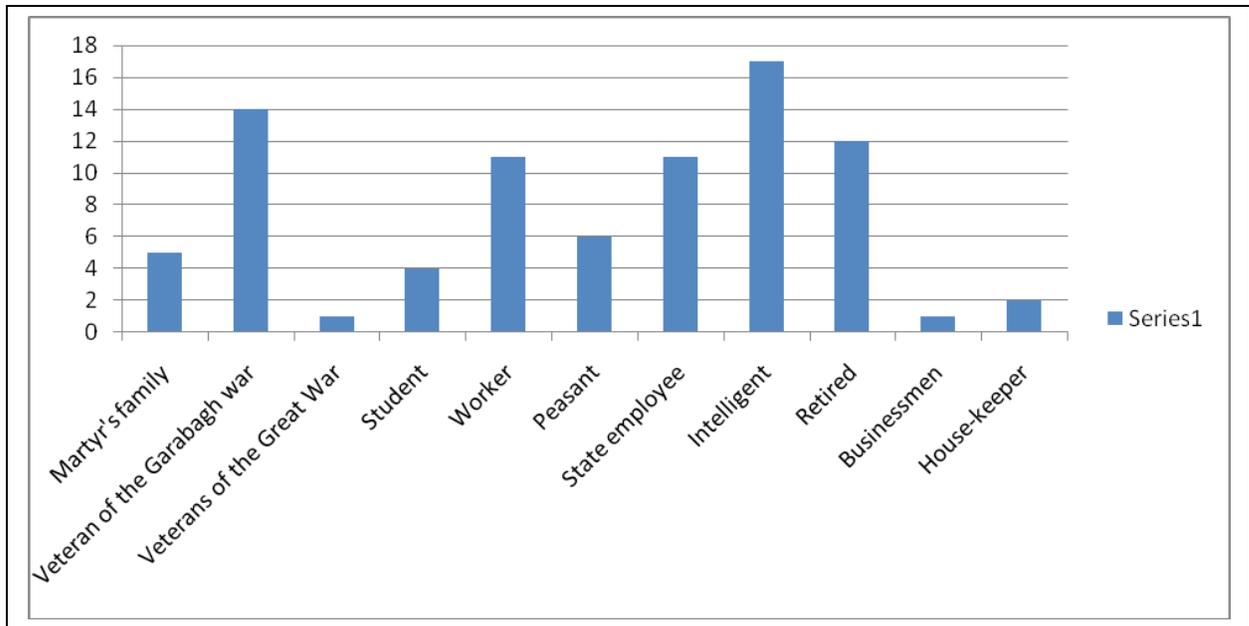
As for Azerbaijani efforts to defend Shusha, most respondents recalled that there was great enthusiasm, but little order. The Armenian attackers were well-equipped, thanks to Russian help, and disciplined, possibly because of their service in combat units of the Soviet military. The Azerbaijanis who were generally confined to construction battalions before 1991 did not have real military experience. Many respondents noted, however, that both sides seemed to be waiting for guidance from Moscow concerning what they should do next.

Table II. Social composition of Shusha IDPs before the conflict



People from Shusha ended up not only in other parts of Azerbaijan but also in Russia, and even in the West. Those who had been villagers suffered the most because they generally ended up in cities. They are still in a waiting game, hopeful that things will return to normal and fearful that conditions may become even worse. The respondents say that their properties in Shusha are valuable but cannot be sold, and they also say they want to hold them for future generations if things work out.

Table III. Current social composition of Shusha IDPs, 2011



All the Shusha IDPs with whom I have spoken work hard to maintain ties with others from their area, using the Karabakh press, the Shusha newspapers, and telephones. Significantly, they reaffirm their ties not only on traditional holidays and family events, but also on black days when their cities and villages were occupied. That, too, defines how they think about the past and hence about the future as well.

THE KARABAKH CONFLICT IN THE DISCOURSE OF POST-MODERNISM: THE CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF PRECONCEIVED INTERPRETATIONS

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So much has been written about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that it is difficult to imagine that there is anything new to be said, but as an investigator not of the conflict itself but rather of one of its interpretations as offered by a recent BBC program entitled "Karabakh: History is Written in Two Versions," I believe we have still more to learn not only about the conflict itself but also about the cultural predispositions which underlie ostensibly neutral discussions of that event.

To help us in this task, I believe we can usefully draw on certain new means of understanding and analysis of social phenomena which have arisen in the contemporary period of post-modernism. Of particular utility is the notion of social reality as a process of social construction (Luckmann & Berger 1966). According to this new epistemology, events and facts are the product of our narrative rather than something directly accessible, any narrative is the result of a specific act of construction (Martin 1986) and always contains an interpretation (Gergen 1998),

skillful recountings can become more credible than reality (Bennett & Feldman 1981), and visual and sound cues in the media may contain more content than the accompanying words (Kress & Leeuwen 1996). Drawing on these principles and the methodology we have used elsewhere (Garagozov 1996), in which we subject individual parts of a narrative to separate examination, we can learn a great deal by examining reporting that at one level may not appear to tell us much that is new.

The BBC program begins with a picture showing fields that are lying fallow because local residents are afraid of mines. [1] The obvious meaning given in this fragment is that there are real "difficulties in conducting agriculture in Karabakh." Then a voice advises that "now, the capital of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic is like any other provincial center. But one needs only to turn off the main street, and recent history recalls itself," with accompanying pictures of houses that have been shelled. And this fragment too, entirely focused on the difficulties of life of the Armenian population of Stepanakert during the "hot" phase of the conflict, can be described as "the crisis situation in [that city] produced by shelling from Shusha." What follows reinforces this point, with various Armenian leaders talking about what they have done to "overcome the crisis" in large part thanks, in the words of the narrator, to "the seizure of the city of Shusha and the driving out of the previous residents (Azerbaijanis)."

However, judging from the next portion of the program, it is still too early for the Armenians to feel comfortable. Their idyllic situation is being violated by Azerbaijan which "for some reason or other" does not want to come to terms with the existing situation. And the program continues in the same town. The message is clear: "not wishing to make their peace with the situation, Azerbaijan is interfering with the peaceful life" of the Armenian residents. And further frames showing cooperation at the individual level by people of the two nationalities clearly send the unspoken message that the problem lies with Azerbaijan as a state rather than Azerbaijanis as individuals. That message that "Azerbaijan is interfering with the restoration of life in Nagorno-Karabakh" is further reinforced by discussion of Baku's opposition to the opening of an international airport there.

The next frames of the BBC program reinforce all these unspoken points. The narrator begins in almost epic language with the following observation: "When the time came to defend his native village, Aleksandr (in the frame is shown a wheelchair-bound invalid) went up to the hills and together with others defended against the enemy." Further, the narrator says, "In February 1992, along this valley flooded refugees." It is not clear why the Azerbaijanis from Khojaly would begin to flee from it if one were not talking about the defense by the Armenians of their own village. Then Aleksandr speaks again: "And then when they passed by Agdam, the Azerbaijanis began to attack us. And the artillery shelling began." (Here again, there is no discussion about how refugees might have done this). "Aleksandr speaks about the bloodiest events of this war. But this is only one of two opposing versions of what happened," the BBC narrator continues. "Over the course of two days, about 500 residents of Khojaly were killed or later froze to death." The Armenians assert, the narrator says, that Azerbaijani refugees shot at them, while the Azerbaijani side is certain that the Armenians intentionally destroyed the peaceful residents.

Because this fragment suggests that there are two sides to the story, it deserves special attention as one of the key elements of the reporting. Although the program's title suggests "two versions," only in this fragment from the narrator do we learn for the first time that there exist "conflicting versions of what happened."

This assertion, we suggest, has particular significance for the understanding of the entire report. We deal with that in more detail below.

But let us consider what else the BBC narrator says. "The traces of the battles are such that it is as if they took place only yesterday," he says. But that observation is used to make the argument that it is important to look forward rather than past and that "the Azerbaijanis must agree to [Armenian] conditions" because the latter reflect the facts on the ground, whatever principles may have been violated. Moreover, the imagery of the program sends the message that "Karabakh is an ancient Armenian land" and that what the Armenians are asking for now is nothing more than the restoration of the status quo ante as well.

Using the methodology we have developed elsewhere, it is possible to describe the messages of the BBC program in terms of four categories: First, there was "a period of crisis and suffering for Armenians which has been overcome," there is now "the restoration of peaceful life," but "the crisis has still not entirely passed since Azerbaijanis who do not want to acknowledge the current situation are interfering with the restoration of the peaceful life," and "Azerbaijanis must recognize and come to terms with the situation as it exists at the present moment."

Thus, as can be seen from our analysis, the BBC report talks about the Karabakh conflict almost exclusively from the Armenian perspective, a constructed narrative that is clearly intended not just to report but to advocate and one that must be the basis for any assessment of the BBC narrator's claim of objectivity. That is all the more so the case because the destruction of Khojaly, one of the most horrible and tragic events of the Karabakh war, is not a version but a fact which is well known and well documented.

As the post-modernist approach suggests, any historical narrative fulfills a large number of social functions, including making possible the construction of our identity and the imposition on us of a particular moral position. Such preconceived and distorted reporting about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is of course nothing new. In that sense, the current program does not provide us with new insights. However, the narrative analysis of this reporting is useful to us because it provides an opportunity to see the cultural bases of these preconceived interpretations.

Research has shown (Bennett & Feldman 1981) that a well-constructed narrative which relates an intentionally devised story often strikes those without more information as more true to life than the actual facts of the case. And while the BBC program is not without its shortcomings—it is internally inconsistent on several points—its overarching message is clearly intended to cause viewers and listeners to reach the position preconceived by the Armenian side and by the narrator as well. As is well known, Armenian culture has a long tradition of constructed historical narratives including those which stress the "victimhood" of that nation. Azerbaijani culture, in contrast, has a far less well-developed set of narratives (Garagozov 2005). But as any objective observer should realize, a history which describes only the position of one of the sides to the conflict can hardly help us understand this conflict, to find bases for dialogue and to achieve a genuine resolution. "Reality," as the theorists of post-modernism teach us, is the product of precisely such dialogue-based communication and the bringing together of the points of view of the various sides.

In conflict situations like that of Nagorno-Karabakh, special types of "dialogue" narratives are needed, narratives that reveal rather than conceal the truth. It is clear that for the development of dialogue, one must include the voices of the other side, in this case of the Azerbaijanis. It is important to listen to their version of history even if it is not so compellingly packaged. And it is also clear that only by establishing a space for dialogue and thus a deeper understanding of the problem will one be able to generate the conditions for a hopeful overcoming of that mutual hatred and distrust which the BBC narrator says at the end is the requirement for progress.

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Notes

[1] Because the BBC program does not include texts, the author has tried to retain in his translations as much of the style of the presenters as possible. The words reproduced below in quotes are those of the program.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the extent of investment in Azerbaijan is approaching 100 billion US dollars" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265774.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is the main threat to regional security and stability" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265193.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "the majority of reports of international organizations connected with freedom of the press are not disinterested" but rather "pursue the goal of putting pressure on the Azerbaijani government and influencing its policies" (<http://news.day.az/politics/266698.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that "until the Karabakh problem is resolved, the normalization of relations with Armenia is impossible" (<http://news.day.az/politics/264984.html>).

The Russian government hands over to Baku approximately 300 documents on Armenian acts of genocide against Azerbaijanis in the early years of the 20th century (<http://news.day.az/politics/265861.html>).

Czech President Vaclav Klaus says that Prague is "interested in energy cooperation with Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/266572.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

May 15

The Foreign Ministry says that Baku is ready to assume responsibility for the conduct of the Eurovision 2012 competition (<http://news.day.az/politics/267474.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the victory of Azerbaijan in the Eurovision 2011 competition is "the result of the growing image of Azerbaijan" and represents "a beautiful holiday for Azerbaijanis and the entire Turkic world" (<http://news.day.az/politics/267479.html>).

May 14

Iranian foreign ministry officials say they are investigating the statement of the Iranian embassy in Yerevan about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in which there was no mention of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity as the basis of any settlement (<http://news.day.az/politics/267401.html>).

May 13

President Ilham Aliyev receives General Duncan J. McNabb, commander of the US transportation command (<http://news.day.az/politics/267180.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the Azerbaijani membership of the mixed Azerbaijani-Czech commission on economic, scientific-technical and cultural cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/267312.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Petros Efthymiou, president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/267278.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev discusses bilateral military cooperation with General Duncan J. McNabb, commander of the US transportation command (<http://news.day.az/politics/267250.html>).

The Foreign Ministry criticizes the resolution adopted by the European Parliament concerning freedom and human rights in Azerbaijan as inaccurate and incomplete (<http://news.day.az/politics/267203.html>).

The ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party issues a statement criticizing the resolution of the European Parliament concerning media freedom in Azerbaijan and saying that unfortunately the contents of that resolution do not correspond to reality (<http://news.day.az/politics/267302.html>).

Khanhuseyn Kazymly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Yerevan's calls for the Armenian diaspora to punish the presidents of the US and France for failing to support Armenia's position on 1915 will backfire on Armenian leaders (<http://news.day.az/politics/267147.html>).

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the secretary general of NATO, says that "frozen conflicts' are a potential threat to security in the Caucasus" (<http://news.day.az/politics/267230.html>).

Dunya Miyatovich, the OSCE representative for media freedom, says that there have been positive changes in the media sphere in Azerbaijan over the last year and a half (<http://news.day.az/politics/267166.html>).

The Indonesian Foreign Ministry announces that Azerbaijan is joining the Non-Aligned Movement (<http://news.day.az/politics/267242.html>).

Moscow State University hosts a roundtable on "Russian-Azerbaijani Relations at the Present Time: Problems and Prospects" (<http://news.day.az/politics/267265.html>).

May 12

President Ilham Aliyev receives Petros Efthymiou, president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/267069.html>).

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov says that Baku has made the introduction into the Azerbaijani armed forces of long-range rockets a priority (<http://news.day.az/politics/267048.html>).

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov heads an Azerbaijani delegation to the IDEF-2011 international defense exhibition in Istanbul (<http://news.day.az/politics/267065.html>).

The Defense Ministry rejects as without foundation Armenian reports about the wounding of a civilian on the ceasefire line (<http://news.day.az/politics/266979.html>).

Ibrahim Hajiyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Indonesia who is jointly accredited to the Philippines and Timor-Leste, presents his credentials to Timor-Leste President Jose Ramos Horte (<http://news.day.az/politics/267043.html>).

Nushiravan Maharramli, the chairman of the National Committee for Radio and Television, receives Dunya Miyatovich, the special representative of the OSCE for media freedom (<http://news.day.az/politics/267019.html>).

Eldar Ibrahimov, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, says that the OSCE Minsk Group should present a report on its activity to the assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/267050.html>).

Rafael Huseynov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the Armenian side is doing everything it can to interfere with the work of the OSCE subcommittee on Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/266863.html>).

Azerbaijani firms take part in the Moscow International Travel Fair (<http://news.day.az/economy/266949.html>).

Armenian officials say a Russian media report suggesting that Yerevan was seeking to have Iran become the mediator in talks about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and an organizer of a referendum on the independence of Karabakh is not accurate (<http://news.day.az/politics/267066.html>).

Teymuraz Sharashenidze, Georgia's ambassador to Baku, says that Georgian-Azerbaijani relations are "at a high level," reflecting the "strategic partnership" between the two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/266942.html>).

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, secretary general of NATO, meets with US officials in Washington to discuss, among other things, the frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/266504.html>).

May 11

President Ilham Aliyev receives Dunya Miyatovich, the special representative of the OSCE for media freedom (<http://news.day.az/politics/266826.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva hosts her Latvian counterpart Lilita Zatlers who is visiting Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/266784.html>).

Defense Minister Yaver Jamalov signs cooperation agreements with his Turkish counterpart Vejdi Genul concerning the joint development and manufacture of new weapons systems (<http://news.day.az/politics/266813.html>).

Defense Minister Yaver Jamalov says that Azerbaijan plans to produce 60 drone aircraft by the end of 2011 (<http://news.day.az/politics/266805.html>).

Tofik Musayev, deputy permanent representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, calls on the UN not to allow Armenia to remain without punishment for its crimes and violations of UN resolutions (<http://news.day.az/politics/266740.html>).

Govhar Bakhshaliyeva, a Milli Majlis deputy says, that she thinks that "with the passage of time, the Armenian side has become convinced that the occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan gives them nothing except new problems and that from this suffer the ordinary people" (<http://news.day.az/politics/266640.html>).

Bilge Cankorel, the head of the Baku office of the OSCE, says that he believes that "a dialogue between the powers and the opposition in Azerbaijan will take place" (<http://news.day.az/politics/266749.html>).

US State Department officials at a briefing in Washington point to Azerbaijan as a model of tolerance for other countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/266728.html>).

Latvian officials offer Azerbaijan the use of Latvian ports in the course of the fourth session of the international commission on economic, scientific-technical and cultural cooperation between Azerbaijan and Latvia in Riga (<http://news.day.az/economy/266821.html>).

May 10

President Ilham Aliyev receives ISESCO Director General Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri (<http://news.day.az/politics/266604.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Mammadguliyev takes part in the Council of Europe ministerial in Istanbul (<http://news.day.az/politics/266527.html>).

Azerbaijan's consulate general in Aktau organizes the publication in Kazakh and Russian of a book entitled "Two Peoples—One Fate" concerning Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan (<http://news.day.az/politics/266610.html>).

French Senator Nathalie Goulet supports Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and opposes any official declaration of the events of 1915 as "an Armenian genocide" (<http://news.day.az/politics/266592.html>).

May 9

President Ilham Aliyev leads Azerbaijanis in the commemoration of Victory Day (<http://news.day.az/politics/266367.html>).

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili says that Tbilisi wants "Georgia's Azerbaijanis to be successful people in Georgia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/266431.html>).

May 8

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, meets with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on the sidelines of the World Women's Summit in Turkey (<http://news.day.az/politics/266321.html>).

May 7

The Foreign Ministry denounces as "nonsense" an Armenian foreign ministry claim that Baku has used Al Qaeda forces against Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/266194.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that "all processes connected with air routes in the occupied territories" must follow international legal rules (<http://news.day.az/politics/266195.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that media reports about a Georgian plan to organize disorders in Azerbaijan is disinformation designed to weaken ties between the two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/266223.html>).

Bahar Muradova, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that Yerevan's statements and actions about the occupied territories are "unconstructive" (<http://news.day.az/politics/266225.html>).

Ziyafat Askarov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the Azerbaijani army is capable in "a very short time" of fulfilling any task set before it (<http://news.day.az/politics/266192.html>).

May 6

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Hisashi Tokunaga (<http://news.day.az/politics/266137.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Ivan Viranataatmaju, Indonesia's ambassador to Azerbaijan who is resident in Tehran, at the completion of his diplomatic appointment (<http://news.day.az/politics/266127.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov is received by Montenegrin President Filip Vujanović (<http://news.day.az/politics/266054.html>).

Finance Minister Samir Sharifov takes part in the 44th annual meeting of the Council of Bank Administrators (<http://news.day.az/economy/266111.html>).

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov receives Mihal Labenda, Polish ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/266125.html>).

Culture and Tourism Minister Abulfaz Garayev says that Baku will continue to oppose Armenian efforts to include in UNESCO programs materials from the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/266032.html>).

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijani consul general in Los Angeles, tells the Pacific Council on International Policy that Azerbaijan is playing an expanding role in Eurasia (<http://news.day.az/politics/265939.html>).

Zahid Oruj, a Milli Majlis deputy, proposes giving the US a list of terrorists who have carried out actions against the Azerbaijani people (<http://news.day.az/politics/266035.html>).

Bilge Cankorel, head of the OSCE office in Baku, says that Azerbaijani laws are "in practice close to perfection" (<http://news.day.az/politics/266084.html>).

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari tells incoming Azerbaijani Ambassador Inayatulla Kakar that Pakistan intends to broaden bilateral ties with Azerbaijan particularly in economics, trade, and investment (<http://news.day.az/politics/265956.html>).

Laszlo Kover, the speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, tells Vilayat Guliyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Budapest, that Hungary intends to broaden inter-parliamentary ties with Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/266069.html>).

The Council of Europe and the European Union officially launched projects valued at four million euros to promote democracy, effective administration and stability in the countries of the Eastern Partnership (<http://news.day.az/politics/266039.html>).

May 5

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov discusses cooperation with his Montenegrin counterpart Milan Roćen (<http://news.day.az/politics/265743.html>).

Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev takes part in the Azerbaijani-German business forum in Berlin (<http://news.day.az/economy/266123.html>).

Taxation Minister Fazil Mammadov signs an agreement with his Lithuanian counterpart Modestas Kaseliauskas concerning technical cooperation (<http://news.day.az/economy/265780.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the foreign relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that Yerevan is attempting to change the direction of the negotiating process on Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/265809.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, executive secretary of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, receives Herbert Quelle, German ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/265899.html>).

Adil Aliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "by his cynical declarations, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan has already gone further than such a well-known criminal as [Nazi propaganda chief] Goebbels" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265772.html>).

Bakhtiyar Aliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that changes in the position of the Armenian diaspora in the US and of "Armenia in general" are "the result of the activities of the Azerbaijani side" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265650.html>).

Elman Mammadov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the US needs to redefine its approach to Armenian terrorism in the wake of its destruction of Osama bin Laden (<http://news.day.az/politics/265620.html>).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev submits the Russian-Azerbaijani border treaty to the Duma for ratification (<http://news.day.az/politics/265757.html>).

Jacqueline Carpenter, the deputy head of the OSCE Baku office, says that the OSCE is satisfied with the level of cooperation with Azerbaijan's Press Council (<http://news.day.az/politics/265862.html>).

Michael Green assumes the post of the new director of USAID in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/society/265858.html>).

May 4

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva says that Baku is providing "material support for the restoration" of the Louvre (<http://news.day.az/politics/265706.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov tells Serbian President Boris Tadić that "it is necessary to strengthen the ties of Azerbaijan and Serbia on the basis of mutual national interests" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265836.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his Serbian counterpart Vuk Jeremić (<http://news.day.az/politics/265535.html>).

National Security Minister Eldar Makhmudov receives Belorussian KGB Chairman Vadim Zaytsev (<http://news.day.az/politics/265472.html>).

Deputy Communications Minister Elmir Velizade says that "Azerbaijan is continuing to strengthen its information security" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265601.html>).

The leaders of Azerbaijani media outlets and NGOs consider the report of Freedom House on the state of media freedom in Azerbaijan to be distorted and unjust (<http://news.day.az/politics/265596.html>).

The Defense Ministry notes that Armenian soldiers have often killed other Armenian soldiers and then sought to blame Azerbaijani forces for the deaths (<http://news.day.az/politics/265540.html>).

The office of the Azerbaijani ombudsman sends to the UN a declaration concerning the anniversaries of the Armenian occupation of Shusha, Lachin and Kalbajar (<http://news.day.az/politics/265678.html>).

Russian Vice Prime Minister Sergey Ivanov says that Moscow's position on the delimitation of the Caspian remains unchanged (<http://news.day.az/politics/265539.html>).

The French Senate rejects a bill that would have made any denial of "the genocide of Armenians" by the Ottoman Empire a crime (<http://news.day.az/world/265695.html>).

The Swiss foreign ministry responds to a protest note by the Azerbaijani embassy and says that it is the official position of Switzerland that Swiss nationals should not travel the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/265691.html>).

Valery Chechelashvili, the secretary general of GUAM, says that it is possible to build an airport in Karabakh but "its functioning as an international airport is practically impossible" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265556.html>).

May 3

President Ilham Aliyev receives Belorussian KGB Chairman Vadim Zaytzev (<http://news.day.az/politics/265446.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva hosts her Lithuanian counterpart Dalya Gribauskaite in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/265391.html>).

Supreme Court Chairman Ramiz Rzayev receives Uzbekistan Prosecutor General Rashidzhon Kadyrov (<http://news.day.az/politics/265439.html>).

Fuad Muradov, a Milli Majlis deputy, is elected co-chairman of the energy committee of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/265454.html>).

Vugar Safarli, director of the Presidential Foundation for State Support of the Mass Media, says that the latest Freedom House report concerning media freedom in Azerbaijan was based on preconceived notions rather than facts (<http://news.day.az/politics/265379.html>).

Ombudsman Elmira Suleymanova calls on the international community to bring to criminal responsibility Armenian terrorists and their supporters (<http://news.day.az/politics/265302.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the issue of opposing the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan and the problems created by that will be priority directions of [Azerbaijanis] in the Parliamentary Assembly of Euronest" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265676.html>).

Hidayat Orujov, the head of the State Committee for Work with Religious Formations, signs an accord with Papal Nuncio Claudio Gugerotti regulating the work of Catholic bodies in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/265291.html>).

Azerbaijan and the UAE sign an agreement on cooperation in customs work (<http://news.day.az/economy/265325.html>).

Roland Kobia, the EU chief representative in Baku, says that the European Union "comes to Azerbaijan as a real partner" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265387.html>).

UAE Economics Minister Sultan bin Said al Mansuri says that his country will open an embassy in Azerbaijan before the end of the year (<http://news.day.az/politics/265314.html>).

South Korea's Development Bank extends a credit to Azerbaijan for the development of educational programs (<http://news.day.az/society/265375.html>).

May 2

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is the main threat to regional security and stability" (<http://news.day.az/politics/265193.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev presents Deputy Foreign Minister and Rector of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy Hafiz Pashayev with the *Shohret Order* on the occasion of his 70th birthday (<http://news.day.az/politics/265235.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Armenian complaints about the loss of Armenian lives are inappropriate given that Armenia is in occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory (<http://news.day.az/politics/265108.html>).

The Interior Ministry says the diplomatic representations of the US and Western countries in Baku are secure (<http://news.day.az/politics/265106.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that Armenia "intentionally lies" about Azerbaijan and makes baseless accusations (<http://news.day.az/politics/265096.html>).

Procurator General Zakir Garalov receives his Uzbekistan counterpart Rashid Kadyrov (<http://news.day.az/politics/265074.html>).

Fazil Mustafa, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the events in the Middle East will force Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan to make concessions (<http://news.day.az/politics/264864.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that it is "not a secret for anyone" that the domestic political situation in Armenia is very difficult (<http://news.day.az/politics/265039.html>).

Members of the Azerbaijani and Turkish diasporas assembly in New York's Times Square to protest the activities of the Armenian lobby in the US (<http://news.day.az/politics/265237.html>).

Brian Fall, the United Kingdom's special representative for the South Caucasus, predicts definite progress in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations (<http://news.day.az/politics/265212.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, visits the regions of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the US Peace Corps (<http://news.day.az/politics/265192.html>).

The Azerbaijani embassy in Switzerland lodges a protest note with the Swiss foreign ministry concerning materials on an Armenian exhibit stand in Switzerland about Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/265088.html>).

May 1

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that "until the Karabakh problem is resolved, the normalization of relations with Armenia is impossible" (<http://news.day.az/politics/264984.html>).

Note to Readers

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