



## SECURITY COUNCIL

# Topic 2: The Question of Establishing Peace and Protection for Ethnic Minorities in the Outcome of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

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## I. Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the primary international body responsible for helping establish global peace and security. It is made up of 15 member states, including five permanent members with veto power (the right to prevent any clause/resolution from passing if deemed fit). It has the authority to pass legally binding resolutions, impose sanctions, and authorize peacekeepers/peacekeeping missions. Because of its unique authority and the power wielded by member states, the UNSC plays a key role in responding to conflicts, especially armed ones, humanitarian crises, and threats to minority populations. Unlike other UN bodies, the Security Council has enforcement authority, meaning its decisions can directly shape international action, including sanctions, military interventions, and peacekeeping deployments. This makes it one of the most influential institutions in global governance and conflict resolution.

The Nagorno-Karabakh issue is directly linked to the Council's mandate and authority. The conflict has involved interstate warfare, ethnic displacement, humanitarian concerns, geopolitical competition, and tension. The current phase of the conflict is particularly relevant to the UNSC because it focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding, peace maintenance, and, in particular, the protection of ethnic minorities, which are core responsibilities under international law, governance, and UN principles. In recent years,

the situation has drawn international attention once again due to rapid military developments—on both sides—mass displacement, and concerns about the treatment of civilian populations. This makes it not only a regional dispute but also a test case of how effectively the international community can respond to conflicts involving sovereignty and minority rights.

Delegates must therefore consider both political realities and humanitarian obligations while proposing realistic, enforceable solutions. They must also be able to evaluate other perspectives, historical claims, and legal arguments presented by different states and delegates involved in the conflict. Successful

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participation will require not only knowledge of the issue but also strong diplomatic and negotiating skills, and an understanding of how international law is applied in real-world crises.

## **II. Definition of Key Terms**

- a) Ethnic Minority: A group of people within a state that is different from the majority of the population and government in language, culture, religion, or nationality.
- b) Self-determination: The principle that people and states have the right to determine their own political status and development.
- c) Territorial integrity: linked to self-determination; a legal principle that a state's borders should not be altered by force and fall under the complete jurisdiction of the state.
- d) Peacekeeping operation: an international mission, usually initiated by the UN, to maintain a ceasefire and stabilize post-conflict areas, ensuring that they do not happen again in the future
- e) Ceasefire: A temporary or sometimes permanent halt in fighting between parties in a conflict.
- f) Humanitarian Corridor: A protected route or region that allows the civilians involved in a conflict or aid (e.g., food, water) to move safely during or after the conflict
- g) Ethnic cleansing: The intentional, forced extermination or removal of a population from a region

through violence, intimidation, or coercion.

- h) Autonomy: Limited self-governance granted to a region within a sovereign state (e.g., the ability to decide responses to local issues or implement local laws, while still under the official control of the state's primary government)

### **III. General Overview**

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a long-standing territorial and ethnic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the mountain region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Under international law and according to the UN, Nagorno-Karabakh is recognized as part of Azerbaijan's sovereign territory. No country in the world

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formally recognizes it as an independent state, nor as part of Armenia. Although the Caucasian Bureau of the Communist Party (Kavburo) recognized this region as part of Azerbaijan in 1921, it had historically been home to a majority Armenian population. This created a long-term tension: legal control of the region belonged to Azerbaijan, while the population's ethnic identity was largely Armenian. The dispute over the region began during the late Soviet period, when regional authorities voted to join Armenia in 1988. This vote was rejected by Soviet authorities and by Azerbaijan's government, which escalated tensions and triggered ethnic clashes and displacement. Ethnic tensions then turned into violence, and after the Soviet Union fell in 1991, a full-scale war started between the two nations. By 1994, the Armenians had controlled Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding Azerbaijani territories. A ceasefire agreement ended serious fighting and violence, but failed to lead to a successful political settlement. For decades now, negotiations have been stalled while tensions remained, sometimes leading to violent clashes. Hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were displaced during the war. At the same time, Armenians established a "de facto" governing authority (i.e., a body that exercises practical power over a territory, without having legal or constitutional legitimacy) in the region that lacked international recognition.

In 2020, the war started once again, but this time on an even larger scale than before. Azerbaijan retook significant control over territory during six weeks of fighting before a ceasefire was finally created by Russia, thereby ending hostilities. Russian peacekeepers were deployed to monitor key routes, particularly the Lachin Corridor connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh. These peacekeepers were intended to be a temporary force rather than a permanent UN-style peacekeeping mission, and their mandate depended on agreements among Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia rather than on an international treaty system. In 2023, Azerbaijan launched a military operation that led to the collapse of the Armenian-backed de facto administration. Within a few days, more than 100,000 Armenians were forced to flee to Armenia. Azerbaijan had therefore successfully restored full, complete control over the territory. Since this operation, Azerbaijan has both the legal sovereign and the actual governing authority over

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Nagorno-Karabakh. There is currently no separate government, autonomy arrangement, or international administration in the region.

Today, the conflict has entered a new state: a post-war stage focused on peacebuilding, reintegration, reconstruction, minority protections, the return of refugees, and regional cooperation via diplomacy. The international community is closely monitoring the situation, with particular emphasis on human rights protections and property restitution. Many governments and international organizations are particularly concerned about the rights and safety of ethnic Armenians who previously lived in the region and whether wartime conditions would allow them to return safely. The situation remains sensitive due to the involvement and interest of other regional powers like Russia, Turkey, and Iran, as well as Western states. Because these states have divergent interests in the region, the conflict is regarded not only as a local dispute but also as a geopolitical issue that affects regional stability and international security.

#### **IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views**

- a) Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan supports the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of its sovereign territory and emphasizes territorial integrity as its primary legal argument. It is attempting full reintegration of the region and has promised to provide rights and protections to ethnic minorities, while opposing external interference or assistance.
- b) Armenia: Armenia has historically supported the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and argues that their rights, safety, and cultural identity/history must be protected, and that it currently is not. Armenia has called for international monitoring, assistance, and recognition.
- c) Russia: Russia has played a significant historical role in the conflict, dating back to its control of the region in the 19th century and its management of tensions during the soviet era. After 1991, it acted as the main mediator, managing major ceasefires and maintaining military influence in the region.

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d) Turkey: Turkey strongly supports Azerbaijan politically and militarily and supports Azerbaijan's territorial claims. It also advocates for regional economic integration with the rest of Azerbaijan. e)

United States and European States: Western governments have generally emphasized the continued need for diplomacy, peaceful settlement, and the protection of human rights, particularly those of minority populations. They have supported mediation initiatives and humanitarian assistance to people affected on both sides.

f) OSCE Minsk Group: Previously, the main international mediation tool co-chaired by Russia, the United States, and France. Its influence has declined since the 2020 war but remains significant, at least historically.

g) International NGOs: Organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International watch/monitor human rights conditions, investigate alleged abuses, and advocate for civilian protection

## V. Relevant UN Documents and Articles

1. Resolution 822 (1993): Calls for withdrawal of occupying forces from Azerbaijani territory and respect for sovereignty
2. Resolution 853 (1993): Condemns the seizure of additional territories and demands an end of hostilities
3. Resolution 874 (1993): Reaffirms commitment to territorial integrity and urges implementation of peace proposals
4. Resolution 884 (1993): Condemns violations of the ceasefire and attacks on civilians

Relevant international legal frameworks include:

- a. The United Nations Charter
- b. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- c. Geneva Conventions
- d. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- e. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Together, these documents provide international legal obligations concerning sovereignty, civilian rights/protection, minority rights, and conflict resolution.

## VI. Questions to Consider

- What tools can guarantee the safety and rights of ethnic minorities in Nagorno-Karabakh?
- Should an international monitoring or peacekeeping mission be established?
- How can the international community work to protect minority rights while still respecting territorial integrity and state sovereignty?

- How can cultural and religious heritage sites be protected?
- Should alleged war crimes be investigated internationally or domestically
- What preventative measures and diplomatic strategies could stop renewed conflict?

## VII. Conclusion

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains one of the most complex and sensitive issues arising from the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is not just a territorial dispute, but a layered crisis shaped by history, identity, security fears, and competing geopolitical interests. Although major fighting has stopped for now, a lasting and stable peace is far from guaranteed, especially without strong protections for minorities, meaningful reconciliation efforts, and sustained regional cooperation.

For the United Nations Security Council, this issue highlights a difficult but important responsibility: finding ways to support long-term stability while still upholding international law and preventing humanitarian crises. Delegates must think carefully about how their proposed solutions would work in

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reality, not just in theory. Successful diplomacy in this committee will depend on compromise, negotiation, and the ability to balance national priorities with broader international obligations.

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