



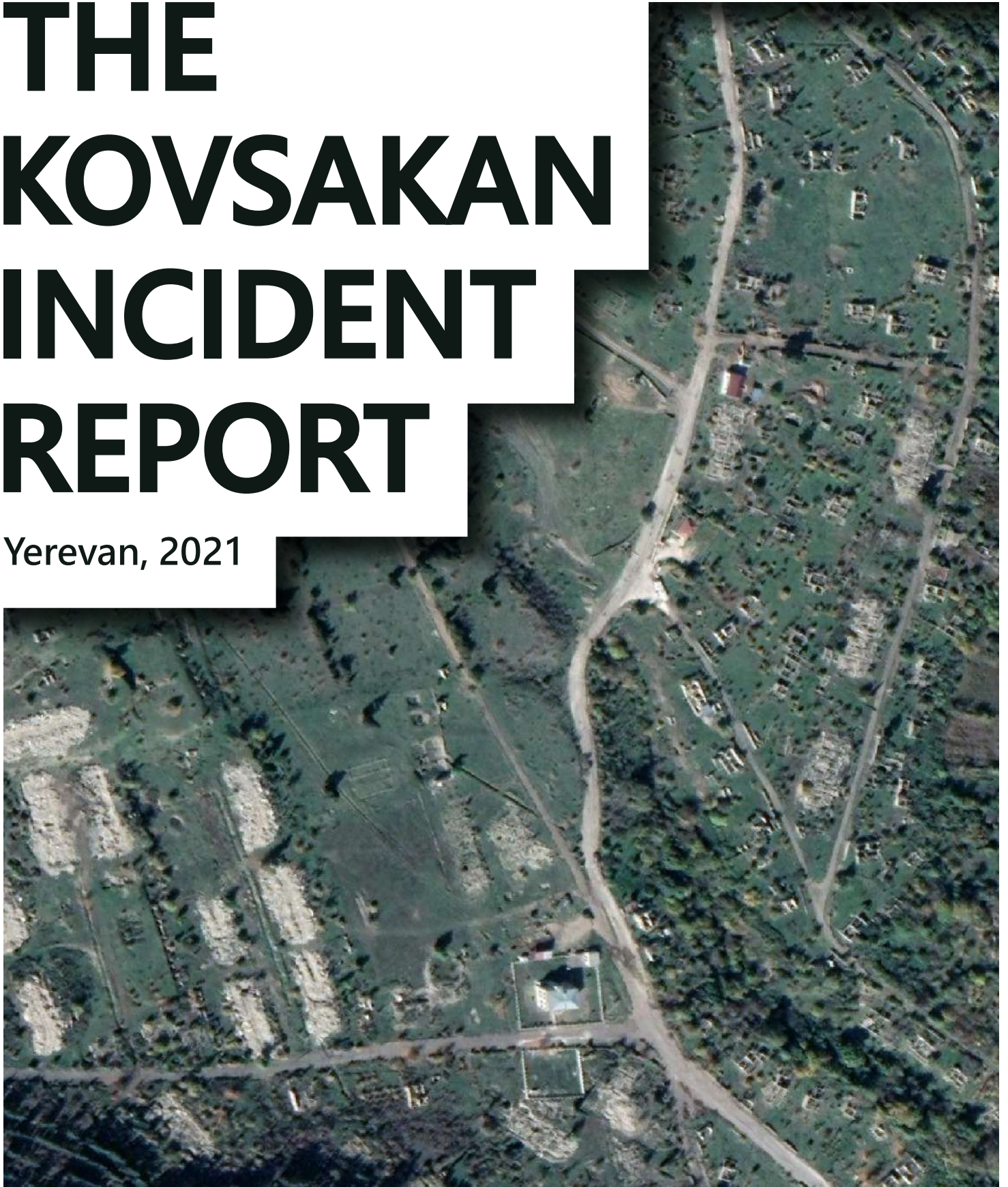
**ARMENIAN  
LEGAL  
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FOR JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS



# THE KOVSAKAN INCIDENT REPORT

Yerevan, 2021



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## I. Brief Incident Summary

In the early morning of 27 September 2020, Azerbaijani armed forces, with the direct participation of Turkey and the deployment of mercenaries, launched a large-scale attack against the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). This turned into a full-scale war, accompanied by gross violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In the course of war, on 20 October 2021, the city of Kovsakan<sup>1</sup> was claimed to be seized by Azeri soldiers. The following day, on 21 October 2021, around 61 Armenian military personnel were mobilized and traveled towards Kovsakan from the military base in Kapan. Upon approaching the outskirts of Kovsakan, the unit was met by armed Azeri soldiers. The ambush resulted in the exchange of gunfire and the capture of Armenian soldiers by the State Border Service of Azerbaijan. A total of 20 soldiers escaped the ambush by utilizing the thick vegetation and nearby river to make their way back in the direction of Kapan. Around 15 soldiers were killed in action or immediately afterwards. Overall, 25 soldiers were captured, 4 of which were executed after a short time. A group of 13 survivors were captured in the proximity of Kovsakan. They were bound at the wrists and marched along the road to a location near Kovsakan Middle School (named after Tatul Krpeyan) and made to kneel. Videos of these events were taken by some members of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan. A separate video of an execution was published in the Azerbaijani media, depicting some of the personnel of the Kovsakan group being executed in captivity. The government of Azerbaijan neither acknowledges nor confirms that the Armenian soldiers seen in the videos are POWs.

Overall, of the 61 identified personnel, 15 were killed presumably in action, 20 escaped, 25 were captured, 5 of which were later repatriated. A further 17 were killed in captivity and the fate of the remaining 3 captives (Arsen Karapetyan, Norik Arakelyan and Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan) remains unknown. Additionally, the status and whereabouts of the one remaining individual is unknown.

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<sup>1</sup> Kovsakan is called Zəngilan in Azerbaijani.

## II. Identification Methodology

Individuals in this report, seen in the videos, were identified with the help of a variety of techniques:

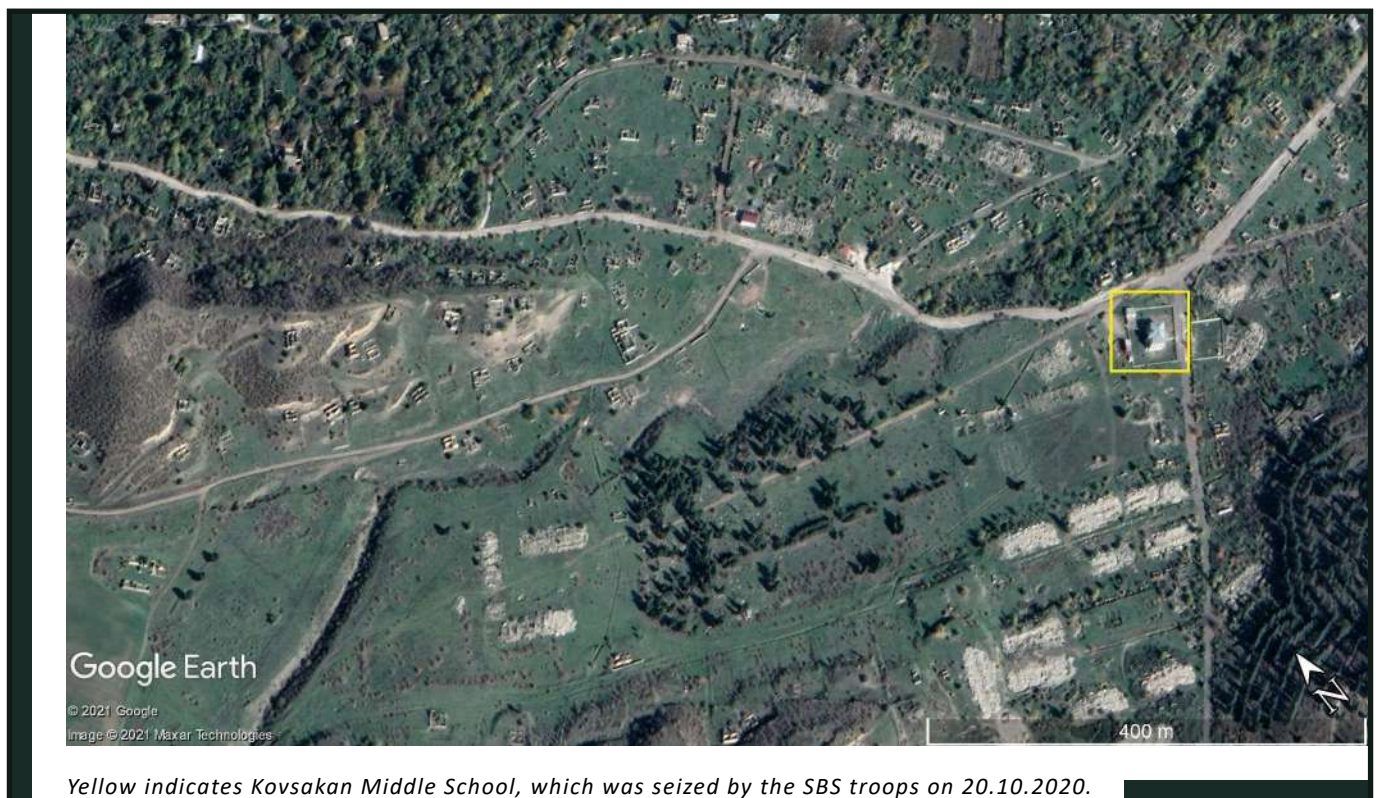
- Expert conclusion (including expertise of facial characteristics),
- Testimonies by fellow soldiers and relatives,
- Uniform pattern identification method.

Armenian military uniforms utilize pixelated camouflage patterns made up of several colored shapes - white, medium brown, olive green, and black shapes on a khaki background. The uniform is sewn using multiple pieces of the same fabric. The front, sides, pockets, pocket flaps, collar, back and sleeves, are all made of different pieces cut from a larger fabric. In the photo below, the individual pieces of fabric are highlighted in different colors. The location of the colored shapes of the pixelated camouflage vary from piece to piece, thus amounting to a unique "fingerprint". The chance of all or most of the colored shapes of the camouflage appearing in the same spot in different uniforms is extremely low. This is further confirmed by a study of more than 40 publicly available photos of actual military servicemen wearing the Armenian military uniform.



### III. Description of Events

On 20 October 2020, a video titled “The Azerbaijani Flag was Raised in Zangilan”<sup>2</sup> was posted on YouTube by the State Border Service of Azerbaijan,<sup>3</sup> indicating that Kovsakan had been occupied by Azeri soldiers. The State Border Service of Azerbaijan (hereafter referred to as SBS) is a governmental law enforcement agency in charge of protecting the borders of Azerbaijan and is independent from the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan. The SBS was directly involved in military operations during the conflict.<sup>4</sup> On 19 October, 2020, the military command of SBS received praise from President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev for raising the Azerbaijani flag over the Khudafarin bridge,<sup>5</sup> as well as for participating in the occupation of several residential settlements.<sup>6</sup>



On 21 October, around 61 Armenian military personnel were sent in three buses from the military base in Kapan at 05:00 towards Kovsakan. The number of personnel is estimated from the information submitted by the surviving soldiers, repatriated POWs, and other sources. The 61 soldiers are identified, nevertheless, and the list is not exhaustive. Other cases may emerge if more members of the group are later identified. It should be noted that many of the soldiers were not familiar with each other, since the group was formed immediately prior to the operation by incorporating several units of reservists mobilized in different military commissariats. The group was intended to meet an assigned person near the mine approximately 5 km northwest of Kovsakan. However, the rendezvous did not occur and the group continued toward Kovsakan, arriving at the outskirts of the city at approximately 07:00.

<sup>2</sup> Zəngilan şəhərində Azərbaycan bayrağı qaldırıldı, Dövlət Sərhəd Xidməti, 20.10.2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yvp7A79hxm4>

<sup>3</sup> See link for official webpage of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan <http://www.dsx.gov.az/>

<sup>4</sup> For more details, see Chapter VIII, Involvement of the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

<sup>5</sup> Xudafarın körpüsünün üzərində Azərbaycan bayrağı qaldırıldı, Dövlət Sərhəd Xidməti, 20.10.2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\*BpWGYU\\*JQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=*BpWGYU*JQ)

<sup>6</sup> Release of the Press Service of the President, Azertac, 19.10.2020, <https://azertag.az/en/xeber/1617731>

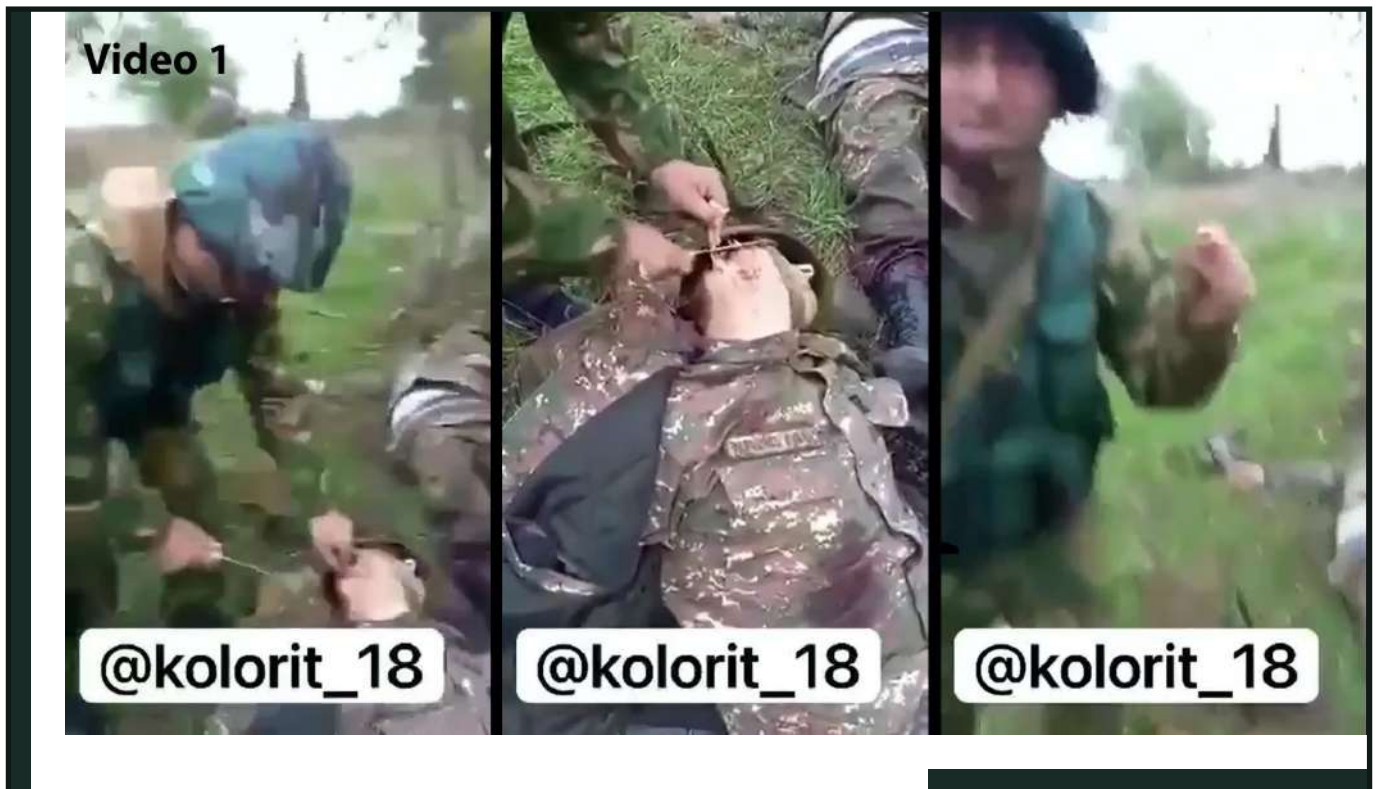
Near the entrance of Kovsakan, at latitude 39° 5'32.47"N and longitude 46°38'21.07", soldiers noticed a group of armed soldiers from Azerbaijan. The buses stopped and the soldiers disembarked, and an exchange of gunfire began. Overall, 20 soldiers managed to escape the ambush and safely return to Armenia. Among the survivors, an Armenian soldier by the name of Davit Katanyan, along with three other fellow soldiers managed to escape the ambush by heading East and swimming through the Vorotan River, then moving on foot towards the mine at the entrance to Kovsakan. They were later rescued by reinforcements from Armenia and taken back to Kapan.



## IV. Casualties and Maltreatment of Dead Bodies

15 soldiers were presumably killed in action in the outskirts of Kovsakan on 21 October 2020. The bodies of these soldiers appear in several videos, published by the Azeris after the battle. In two of these videos, 4 more individuals are seen with their hands tied, lying on the ground, presumably killed after being captured.

In Video 1, an Azeri soldier cuts off the ear of a killed Armenian serviceman and demonstrates it on camera.



The footage depicts bodies of victims later seen in other videos, confirming that all materials belong to the same chain of events of the Kovsakan incident.



Two separate videos showing how the dead bodies of Armenian servicemen are being dragged along the road were spread on the Internet. Video 10 depicts the bodies of two Armenian soldiers tied to a

Turkish made Otokar APV, a vehicle known to be used by the State Border Service of Azerbaijan. This exact model of vehicle appears in official press release videos put forth by the State Border Patrol's account. Several Azeri soldiers wearing SBS uniforms are seen in the video, including the cameraman. It should be noted that the two deceased men in these videos have no visible facial hair and have indications of having been killed relatively recently. They are being dragged along the road, which measures approximately 5-6 meters wide and is whitish in color. The color of the road is indicative of spillage from trucks transporting lime in trucks on the road. They are seen tied at the ankles with rope, implying the absence of specialized equipment.

The two men from Video 10 also appear in the next videos, as 2nd and 3rd from the right.



Another video was spread on the Internet, depicting several dead bodies of Armenian servicemen lying on the ground. Two of the corpses are being dragged along the ground, tied with a rope. These 2 corpses can also be seen in Videos 7, 8 and 9.

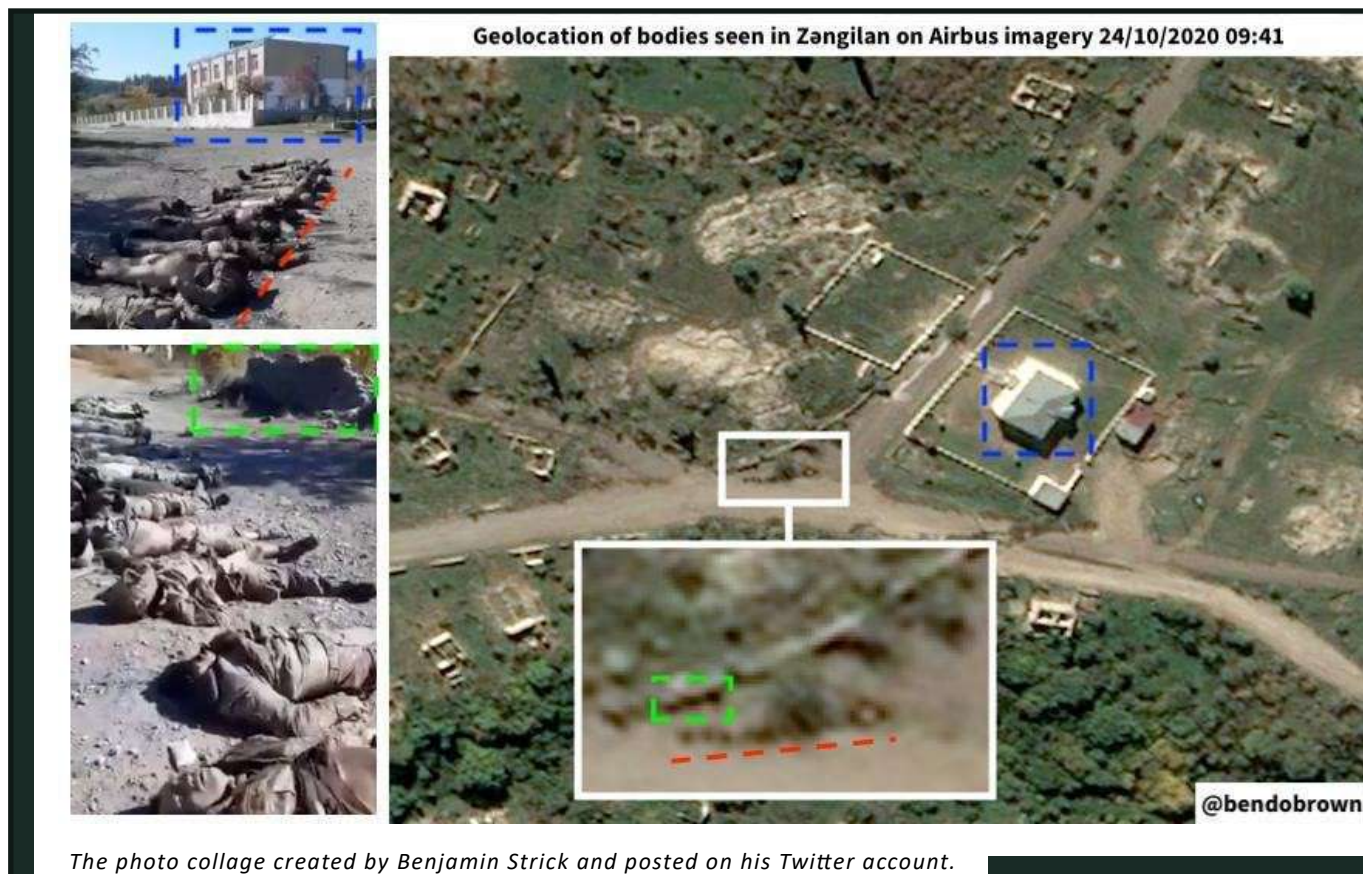


Video 7, Video 8 and Video 9 show bodies on the ground in a line. Bodies of 14 soldiers are seen in Video 7. Later, 5 more bodies were added to the row which are seen in Videos 8 and 9. The last four men in the row are lying prone with their arms tied behind their backs. The fact that four bodies appear with their arms tied suggests that they were executed after being captured. Notably, repatriated soldiers Tigran Khachatryan, Artur Stepanyan and Gegham Elibekyan saw Erik Nersesov and 3 other captives held in the



Kovsakan Middle School on 21 October 2020. He described seeing the captives' hands tied with a type of synthetic rope frequently used in agriculture.

All the men in these videos appear covered in residue from the limestone or dust covered path and have rope ties around their ankles, indicating they were likely dragged by the vehicle as well before being placed in the line shown. Furthermore, many of the men's clothing is moved high up on their bodies contributing to the working theory that many of these men were dragged by a vehicle to this spot. Digital Investigator Benjamin Strick shared the geolocation of Videos 7, 8 and 9 on his Twitter account.<sup>7</sup> The image was captured at 09:41 on October 24.



<sup>7</sup> Geolocation of footage which shows bodies, some handcuffed, others unclothed, in Zangilan, Benjamin Strick, 30.10.2020, <https://twitter.com/BenDoBrown/status/1322200787141971971>

## V. Prisoners of War

Following the incident, a total of 25 soldiers were captured as prisoners of war by Azeri forces. This number is calculated by summing up the individuals mentioned below:

- a) **5 prisoners of war**, who have already been repatriated (**Tigran Khachatryan, Gegham Elibekyan, Artur Stepanyan, Aleksandr Babayan and Artak Andriasyan**).
- b) **Erik Nersesov and 3 other captives**, who were seen by repatriated Tigran Khachatryan, Artur Stepanyan and Gegham Elibekyan inside Kovsakan Middle School. They were only able to identify Erik Nersesov out of these 4 captives;
- c) **Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan**, who has been captured together with Tigran Khachatryan, Gegham Elibekyan and Artur Stepanyan, was last seen at the “Military police” building in Baku;
- d) **Arsen Karapetyan and Norik Arakelyan** (video);
- e) **Group of 13 captives** (video);

The fate of **one additional soldier** remains unknown.

### 1. Five Repatriated POWs

Three soldiers by the names of Tigran Khachatryan, Gegham Elibekyan and Artur Stepanyan were captured after the ambush during their attempted escape through the surrounding vegetation (together with Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan). They were taken to the building of Kovsakan Middle School and were later transferred to Baku. Tigran Khachatryan was repatriated on 14 December 2020. Gegham Elibekyan and Artur Stepanyan were repatriated on 12 June 2021 – more than 7 months after the end of the war. The fate of Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan remains unknown as of this date.



*From left to right: Tigran Khachatryan, Gegham Elibekyan and Artur Stepanyan.*

Two soldiers – Aleksandr Babayan and Artak Andriasyan were captured in separate instances, several days after the incident. Aleksandr Babayan was held incommunicado for a prolonged period of time. His captivity was acknowledged on 15 April 2021 – more than 5 months after he was captured. Both were repatriated on 12 June 2021. In total, only 5 prisoners of war from the “Kovsakan group” were acknowledged and repatriated -



Tigran Khachatryan, Gegham Elibekyan, Artur Stepanyan, Aleksandr Babayan and Artak Andriasyan. Initially, only Artak Andriasyan appeared in a video published by the Azerbaijanis. The video depicts Azerbaijanis demanding Artak to say “Karabakh is Azerbaijan” and abusing him both physically and mentally. Exactly a year later from the incident, on 21 October 2021, a video depicting Gegham Elibekyan, Artur Stepanyan and Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan appeared on one of the Azerbaijani Telegram channels.

As of this date, the Government of Azerbaijan does not acknowledge the captivity of any other member of the Kovsakan group.

## **2. POWs Confirmed by the Repatriated**

In the school building, Khachatryan’s company saw four other captives, one of whom they could identify as one of the drivers, Erik Nersesov. The remaining three could not be identified. Later, Tigran Khachatryan, Gegham Elibekyan, Artur Stepanyan and Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan were taken to Baku, to a place informally known by repatriated POWs as the “Military Police Building”. Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan was last seen in Baku, at the Military Police. His fate remains uncertain as of this date.

## **3. POWs Appearing in Videos**

### **a. Arsen Karapetyan and Norik Arakelyan**

Two other men who were captured, Arsen Karapetyan and Norik Arakelyan, appear being questioned by Azeri soldiers in separate videos. Karapetyan is seen being asked to state his name and surname on camera, as well as repeat the phrase “Karabakh is Azerbaijan”, which he then does. Arakelyan is also asked to repeat “Karabakh is Azerbaijan” several times. On November 2021, a separate video of Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan was published on Telegram. In the video, an Azeri soldier slaps Aleksandr, while holding a bayonet in his other hand.

Separate applications were lodged to the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of Arsen Karapetyan and Norik Arakelyan. The court granted requests for an interim measure under Rule 39 of ECHR Rules of the Court. In its response, the Government of Azerbaijan only submitted its *inability to identify* these men. As to this date, their fate remains uncertain.



Screenshots from the videos depicting prisoners of war Arsen Karapetyan, Norik Arakelyan and Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan.

### b. Group of 13 Captives



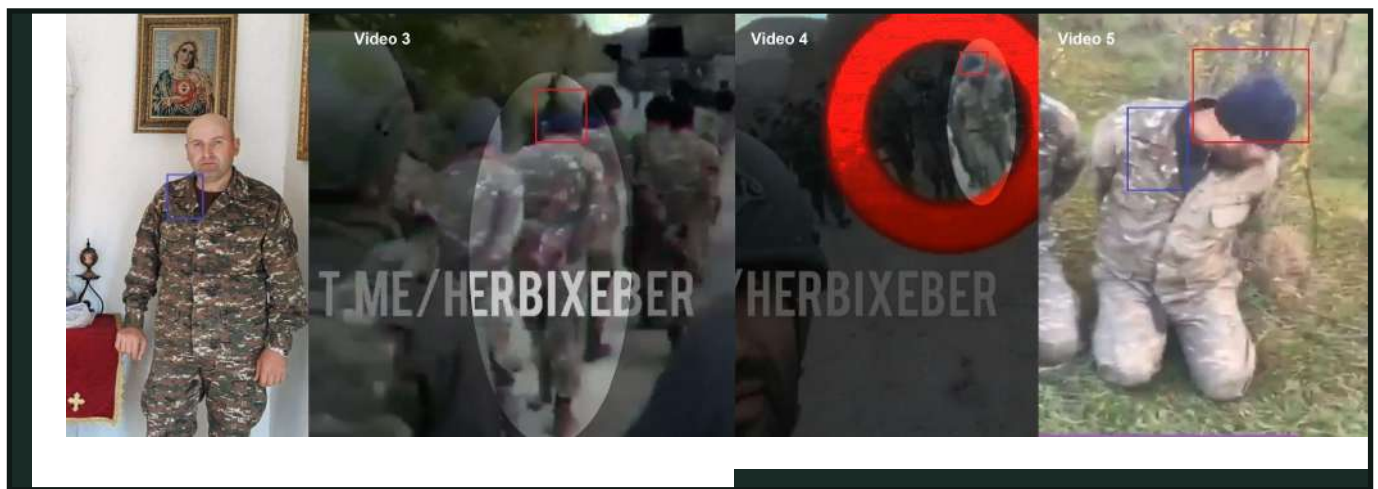
Manually assembled panorama from Video 5 frames.

A group of 13 soldiers was captured on an unknown date after the ambush. All of them appear in a number of videos published in the Azerbaijani media. The growth of facial hair and the tattered state of their uniforms seen in the videos suggest that the group of 13 soldiers was captured several days after the ambush.

Video 4 occurs sometime after the ambush, presumably a few days. It depicts Azeri soldiers filming a line of Armenian soldiers marching. It most likely takes place on the Kapan-Kovsakan road, specifically at the entrance to the city of Kovsakan. This video shows the soldiers walking facing the camera. Following this are Videos 2 and 3, which depict the same Armenian soldiers marching, shown from the back. One of the soldiers, Y. Gasparyan loses his hat here, but was still wearing it in Video 4, which indicates that Video 4 comes earlier.

Video 5, the same 13 captives are seen kneeling on the ground side by side, with their arms tied behind their backs. They appear to be a majority of the same captives seen in Video 4.

**Hayrapet Gevorgyan** is seen clearly shaved in a photograph (provided by his relatives) on the day before the mission to Kovsakan. In all subsequent videos, Gevorgyan appears with heavy facial hair. In Video 5, Gevorgyan can be identified by camouflage marks on his uniform. In Videos 3 through 5, he is identified by the dark blue hat he is wearing in Video 5.



**Samvel Piroyan** is clearly seen in Video 5. Prior to his departure for Kovsakan, he was photographed in uniform wearing a red undershirt and was seen cleanly shaven. In Video 5, he is the 12th from the left and is wearing a jacket red inside with a hood sticking out from his uniform. In Video 5, he is seen with facial hair. The marks on his uniform are identical.



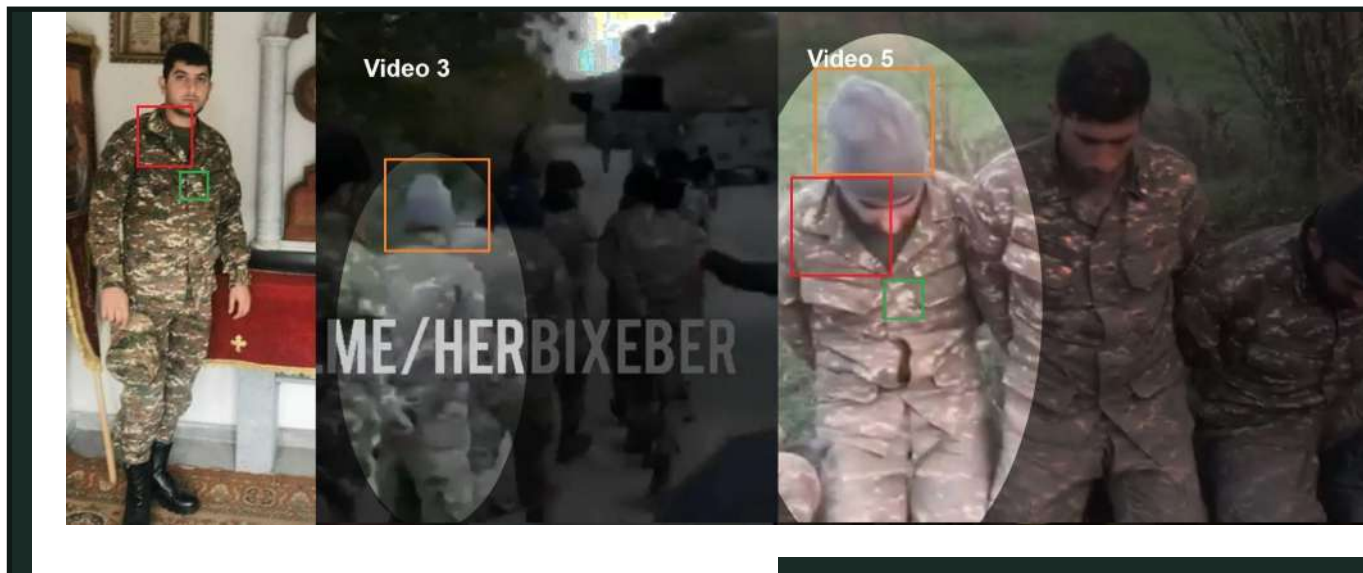
**Garik Melqonyan** is seen in Videos 3, 4 and 5. The most identifiable features of Melqonyan are his belt, sideburns and beard.



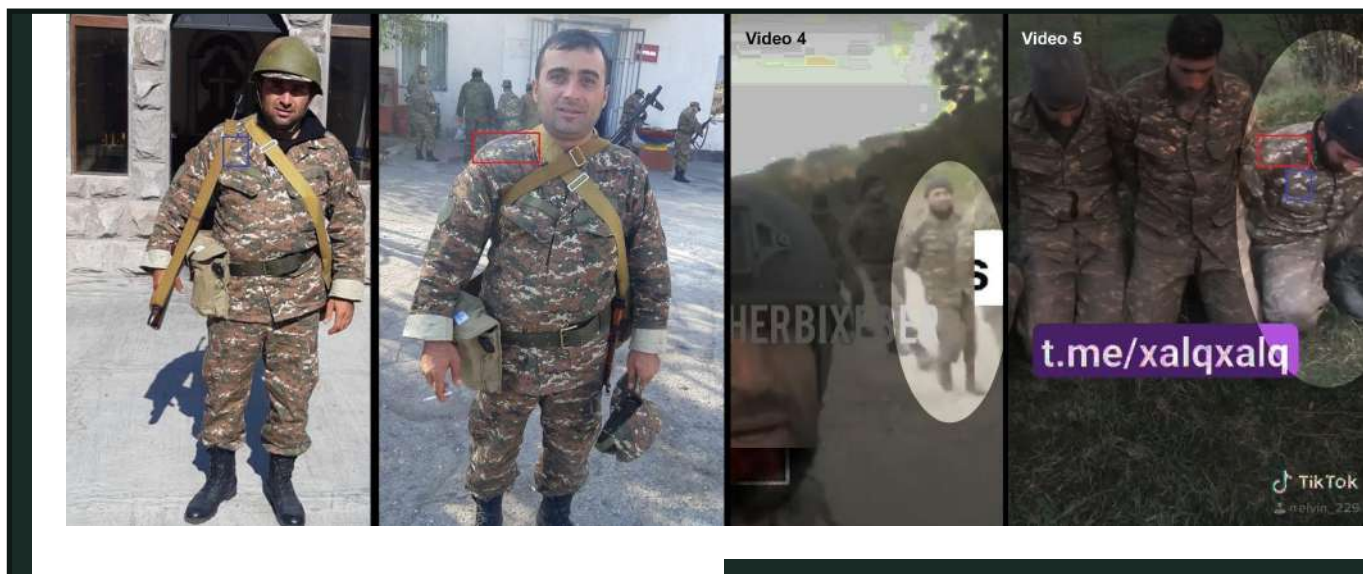
**Yurik Gasparyan** is seen in Video 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Video 3 begins with Gasparyan walking with his arms tied behind his back, wearing a grey hat, and marching to the left of the group. A key distinctive feature of Gasparyan is his jacket with a white vertical line through the center. To his left, an Azeri soldier strikes him in the head or upper body out of the shot, and Gasparyan continues walking with his head hung much lower. His hat comes partially off his head, and after a few more seconds the hat slightly comes off his head and falls off several frames later. Later, his hat is picked by an Azeri soldier and thrown to the ground. In Video 6, Y. Gasparyan is seen lying on the ground, likely shot. He is the tenth in the row of men in Video 5.



**Harutyun Hakobyan** is seen in Videos 3 and 5. In Video 3 he is seen walking in a line with other prisoners with his arms tied behind his back with rope. His face does not appear in this video as he is walking in the opposite direction of the camera. He is identified here by his grey beanie that he wears in both Video 3 and 5. He is also one of the men who has a picture taken in the church prior to leaving for the mission, wearing a uniform identical to the one he is seen wearing in Video 5.



**Karen Hovhannisyan** is seen in Videos 4 and 5. He is seen in two pictures taken before his departure for Kovsakan, both of which clearly show his uniform along with its markings. He is also seen in Video 4 marching along with the other prisoners, as well as in Video 5.



Artur Aloyan, Shavarsh Avdalyan, Grigor Rostomyan, Edgar Nahapetyan, Karapet Harutynyan are all seen in Video 5, with a few of them appearing in Video 2, and a few appearing in Video 3. They can be identified through matching physical appearance and/or markings on their uniform.

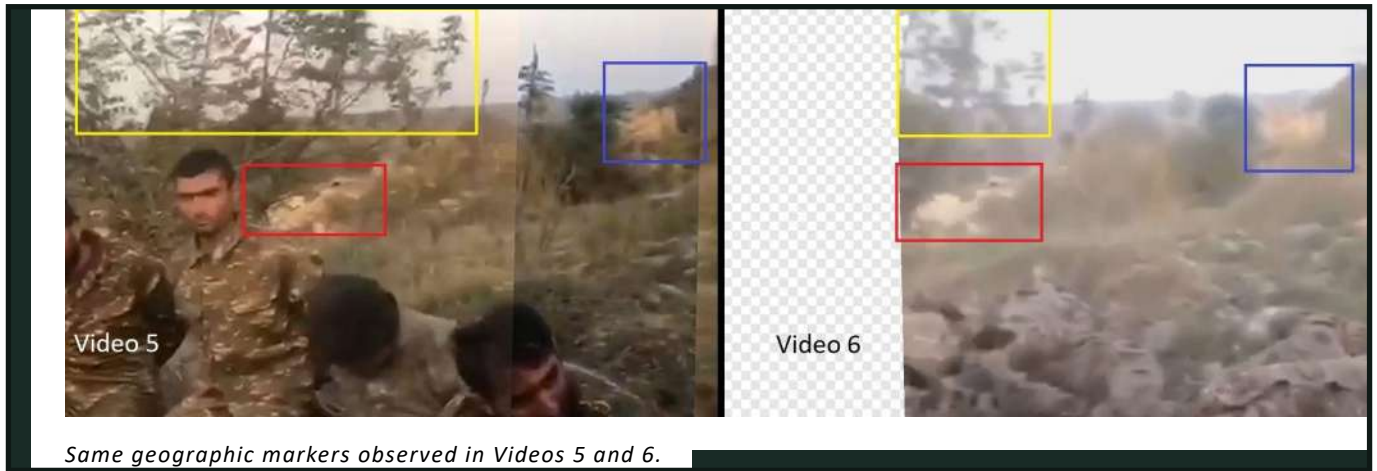


The Government of Azerbaijan only acknowledged the captivity of 5 POWs (Tigran Khachatryan, Gegham Elibekyan, Artak Andriasyan, Artur Stepanyan and Aleksandr Babayan) and refused to acknowledge the captivity of the remaining 20 soldiers, despite their captivity being proven by video materials (15 captives shown) and witness statements of repatriated prisoners of war (5 captives).



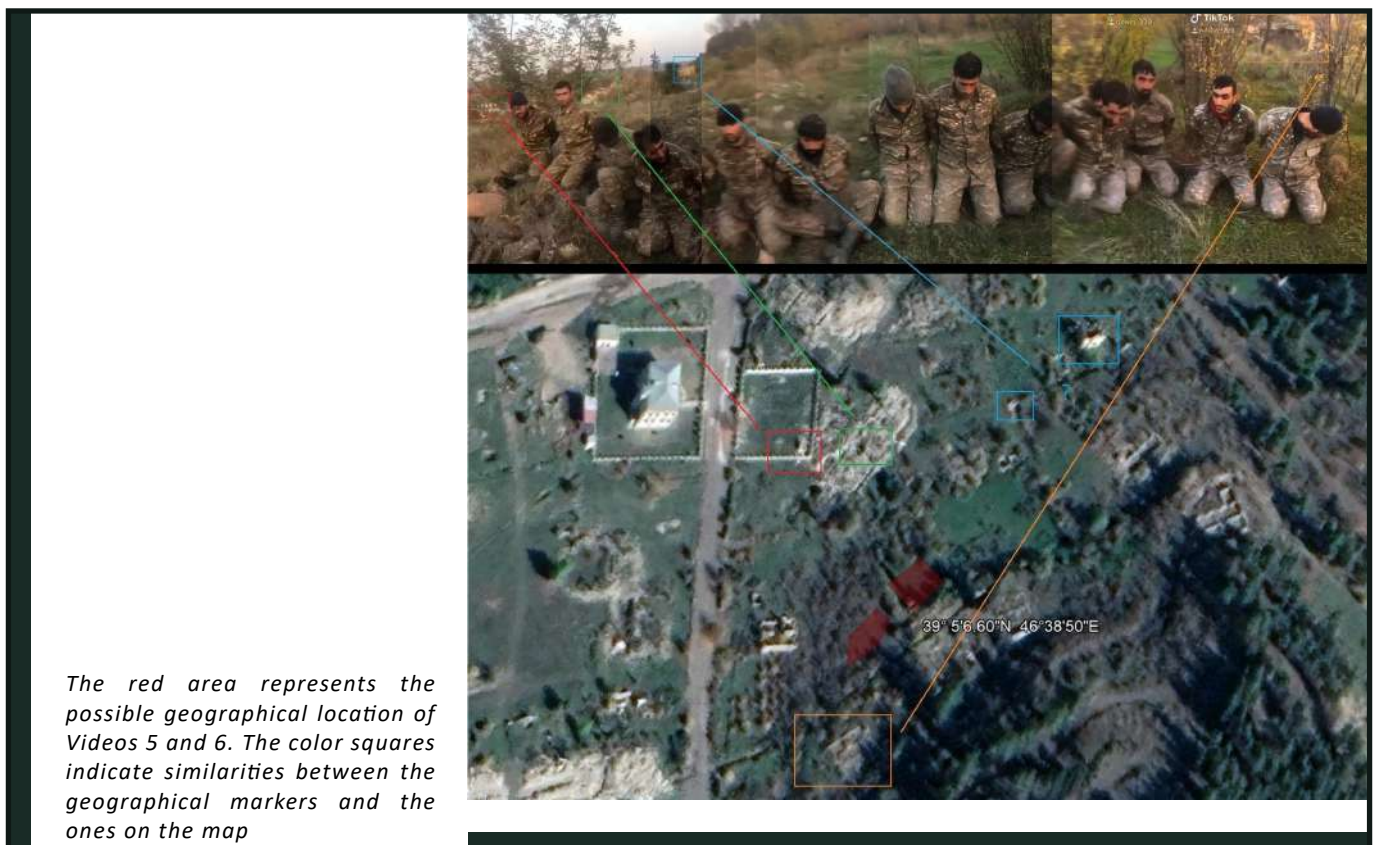
## VI. Execution

The video of execution of POWs ([Video 6](#)) is chronologically the last video from the Kovsakan incident. Analysis of the geographic markers visible in Videos 5 and 6 indicates that they were shot at the same exact location.



There are signs that this [location](#) (Video 5 and 6) is in front of the middle school (Azeri Headquarters). Pomegranate trees appear in the background of this video, which the Principal of Kovsakan Middle School confirmed grew around the perimeter of the school. Further, an upward moving hill is seen in the background, making the location of this video evident.

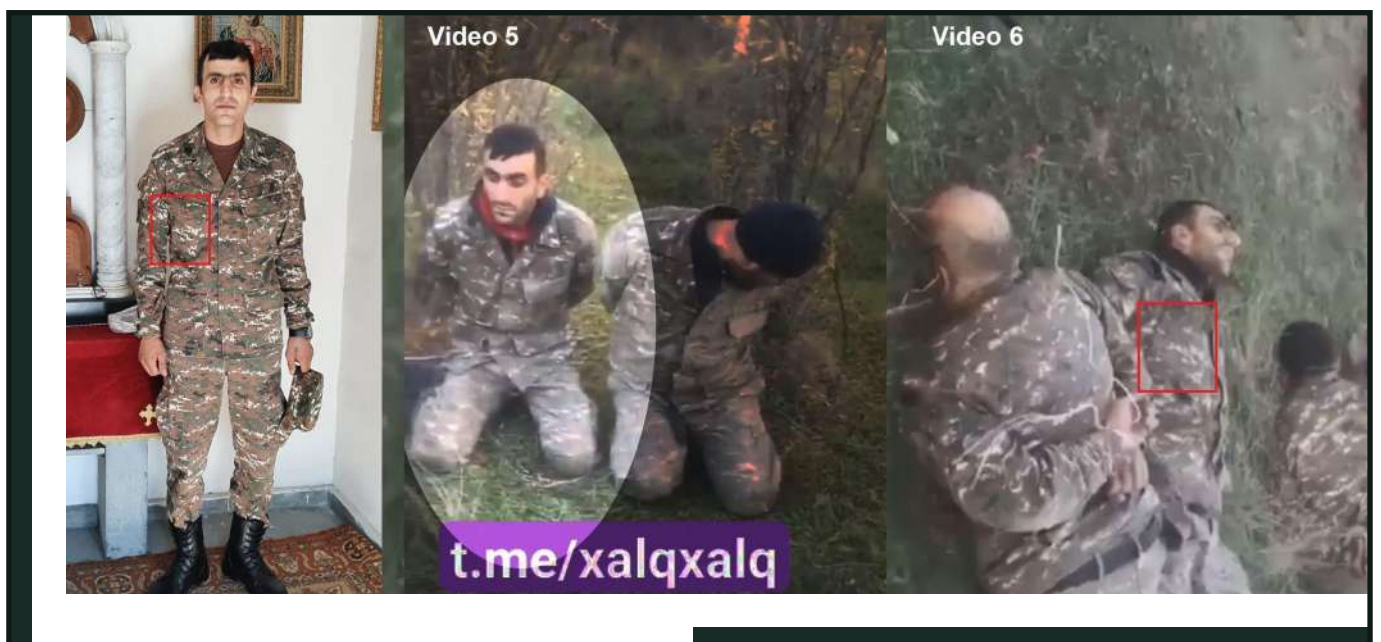
The analysis of the video revealed that many of the men of the Group of 13 appear dead, lying on the ground, with the final shot taking place in the video. The bodies appear lying down in the same order as the previous video.



**Hayrapet Gevorgyan** has a wet stain on his pants, which is also seen in Video 5. His dark blue hat is taken off in Video 6 and his baldness is exposed. He is the first from the right in both videos.



**Samvel Piroyan** is identified by the camouflage marks on the top left pocket of his uniform. In Video 6, he is seen lying supine with no visible wounds to his body, presumably deceased. He is the second from the right in both videos.



**Garik Melqonyan** is identified by his sideburns and overall physique. In the first few seconds of Video 6, an Azeri soldier is seen clearly shooting Melqonyan. The rest of the prisoners are lying motionless on the ground around Melqonyan. It is unclear why Melqonyan is shot again, as he is presumed dead prior to being shot in Video 6. He is the third from the right in both videos.



**Yurik Gasparyan** is identified in Video 6 by the marks on the back of his uniform. He is the fourth from the left in Videos 5 and 6.



**Gevorg Karapetyan** can be identified by the white marks on his uniform pocket and the absence of any article of clothing underneath his uniform. He is also seen in the same position in both videos, 6th from the right.



Three other bodies are clearly seen in the video. Their position matches with the position of Karen Hovhannisyanyan, Harutyun Hakobyan and Artur Aloyan - the fifth, the seventh and the eighth in the row from the right respectively.



In Video 6, overall eight bodies are clearly seen throughout the footage. At 00:04-00:05, the center-left area of the frame appears blurred. However, most probably the blurred part represents corpses of remaining soldiers of the Group of 13 captives.



## VII. Treatment of POWs

Those that were repatriated reported torture, inhumane and degrading treatment received during captivity, including intense physical abuse, malnutrition and lack of medical care. The repatriates testified that they were subjected to severe beatings, especially while in custody of the State Security Service and Military Police. An excerpt from a testimony of a repatriate discussing his time in captivity is as follows: *“In their military police area, we were connected to the heating radiators. We slept on the floor for the first few days. We did not get food or water for a few days. I asked them for water, and they splashed cold water on me from a bucket. All my clothes got wet, and they opened the window and made me lie down on the floor so that I would freeze in the cold. They beat us again. I lost consciousness 2 times. We became psychologically affected there, because they were beating [name hidden] in the cell right next to me and we could hear his torture.”*

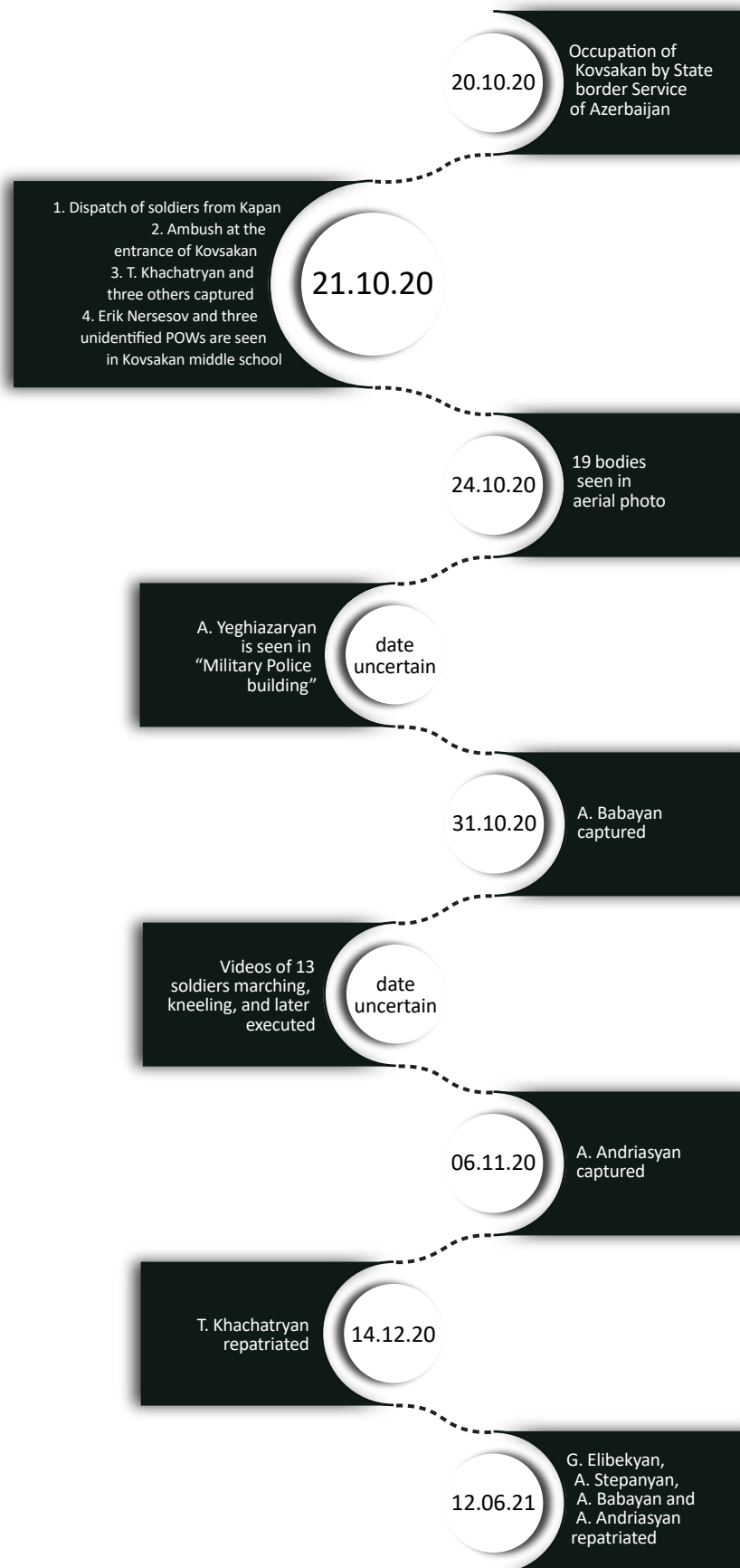
While in custody of the State Security Service, repatriates reported torture and instances of severe physical abuse, including infliction of electric shocks, group beatings, sleep deprivation. Another excerpt from a testimony of a repatriate states: *“Azerbaijani guards entered our cells and demanded us to shout “Karabakh is Azerbaijan!” Whether we were compliant or not, we were subjected to brutal beatings, both in Military Police and in the State Security. There were other captives with me in the cell; three of them were tortured during interrogations using electroshock.”*

After being transferred to a prison in Baku - the final destination before repatriation, the captives were subjected to psychological abuse, solitary confinement, and mockery. They were forced to voice ideas against their will under threats to their physical integrity and life. An excerpt from a testimony of a repatriate: *“I was kept alone for the last four months. It was torturous. They would give us food and drinks in a way that when they poured it, most of it would spill and I had to get the leftovers. They broke the cigarettes then gave them to us. As soon as they opened the cell door, I had to stand up and say “Karabakh is Azerbaijan.” Besides that, they would repeat Aliyev’s statement about Artsakh is Azerbaijani and would try to make us repeat whatever they were saying.”*

The captives were required to put their signatures under unknown or blank documents. They were not provided with legal assistance, nor were they informed that applications were lodged to the ECHR on their behalf. Prior to the repatriation, they were also forced to sign documents obligating them to cooperate with the Azerbaijani authorities. Another excerpt from a testimony of a repatriate: *“Before Red Cross visits, the guards told us we were not allowed to disclose the degrading treatment and we would have to lie and tell the Red Cross we were being treated well. The Red Cross visited me for the first time on February 1. They handcuffed us. The Red Cross gave us cigarettes and sweets, and the Azeris confiscated the cigarettes and took out the filters and started giving us 1 or 2 a day”.*

The same ill-treatment practices of Azerbaijani authorities in the places of detention are illustrated in multiple instances in reports<sup>8</sup> by the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). As mentioned above, out of the 5 repatriated soldiers, only Artak Andriasyan appears in a video published by the Azerbaijanis.

## VIII. Timeline of Events



<sup>8</sup> See, *inter alia*, Report to the Azerbaijani Government on the visit to Azerbaijan carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), from 29 March to 8 April 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/16808c5e43>  
Report to the Azerbaijani Government on the visit to Azerbaijan carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), from 23 to 30 October 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/16808c5e46>

## IX. Involvement of the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The military unit involved in the ambush in Kovsakan was the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The servicemen of SBS appear in the media wearing several types of military uniforms with various patterns. In the video published on 20 October 2020, the SBS soldiers appear wearing green, tan and khaki uniforms of various patterns. Most of those are identical to the uniforms worn by the Rapid Response Unit of the SBS<sup>9</sup> (Çevik Hərəkət Dəstəsi).



The Azeri soldiers standing in front of the school building are wearing combat helmets with tactical attachment mounts. An Azeri soldier appearing in Video 4 wears a helmet of the same type.



In Video 11, an Azerbaijani-made Khazri rifle, which is a domestically made variation of the AK-74, appears in frame. The same rifle which is known to be used by the Rapid Response Unit of the SBS.

<sup>9</sup> Zafər, Dövlət Sərhəd Xidməti, 06.10.2020, <https://youtu.be/2HdPOugZHDs?t=73>



Left photo: servicemen of the Rapid Response Unit of the SBS carrying Azerbaijani-made Khazri rifles. Right photo: a Khazri rifle appears in the video depicting corpses of Armenian soldiers being dragged. Note the two-sector part of the gunstock.

The most distinct camouflage pattern used only by SBS is a variation of a woodland camouflage with black, dark green and aqua green shapes on a sea green background. The pattern is used in production of field uniforms, vests, helmet covers and other equipment

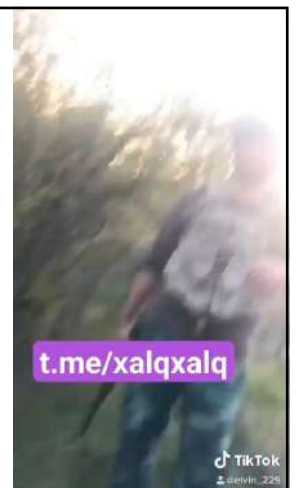


Servicemen of the SBS of Azerbaijan



Sample of SBS camouflage pattern

Soldiers appearing in the videos of the Kovsakan incident are wearing uniforms of this pattern. It should be noted, that at the end of Video 5, depicting 13 captives kneeling in a row, another soldier with the SBS uniform appears at the same spot, from which the video of execution was taken.



From left to right: servicemen of the SBS appearing in Videos 11, 2, 3 and 5 respectively.



On 7 November 2020, a video showing around 15 soldiers of the SBS dancing in a hall inside the Kovsakan middle school after Tatul Krpeyan was published on the youtube channel of Kanal 13 news agency<sup>10</sup>. In the aforementioned video, as well as in several others depicting the Kovsakan Incident, faces of SBS servicemen are clearly seen and may be further identified during a proper investigation.



Several exclusive videos from the Kovsakan Incident were published by Caliber.az media. Despite the fact that the youtube channel of the media was created on 15 October 2016, the first video was published on 21 September 2020, only six days before the war broke out. During the war, the channel published several exclusive videos, such as footage from a IAI Harop UAV operator's display. The said UAV is known to be extensively used by the SBS<sup>11</sup>. On 28 October 2020, the media published another exclusive video on its Telegram channel, which depicted the victims of the Kovsakan Incident. This suggests that the authors of the project are closely affiliated with the SBS personnel.

The Authors of the Caliber.az project are Heydar Mirza<sup>12</sup> and Hans Kloss (pseudonym). H. Mirza is also the host of a TV show Radius, which is aired on a Government-operated television channel İTV (İctimai Televiziya)<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> ƏSGƏRLƏRİMİZ AZAD ETDİKLƏRİ ZƏNGİLƏN RAYONUNDA RƏQS EDİR, 07.11.2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A93CRbX\\_mHU&t=30s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A93CRbX_mHU&t=30s)

<sup>11</sup> Qarabağ Azərbaycanıdır!, Dövlət Sərhəd Xidməti, 03.10.2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OitYGNRIAC>

<sup>12</sup> See H. Mirza's LinkedIn Profile, <https://az.linkedin.com/in/heydar-mirza-552a1088>

<sup>13</sup> See the full playlist of the Radius TV show, [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmBldPlozgD4GTgQUKFyjUG6lWA\\_9\\_F99](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmBldPlozgD4GTgQUKFyjUG6lWA_9_F99)

## X. Critical Figures

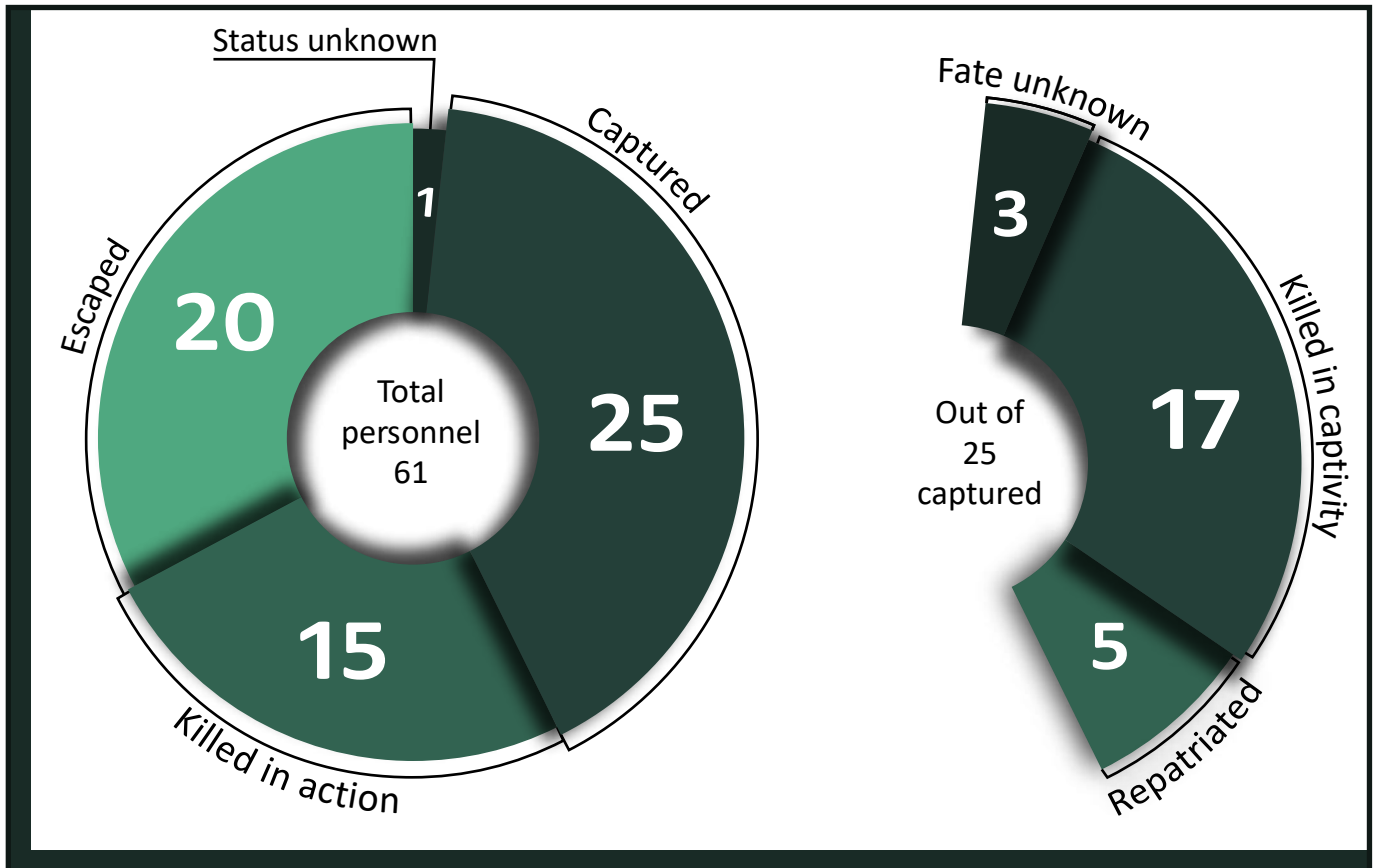
There are several key figures involved in the Kovsakan incident. These key figures are notable directors and leaders of the State Border Service, Military Police, and detention facilities throughout Azerbaijan - institutions where Armenian POWs were abused, tortured, and killed. The events that occurred including the unlawful killings and torture of Armenian POWs are a byproduct of these institutions and their leaders. This incident would not have occurred without their direct involvement.

On December 25, 2020, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev awarded 3,549 servicemen the “For the Liberation of Zangelan” medal. Many of the men who received the award are from the State Border Service of Azerbaijan and played a critical role in the Kovsakan incident. The critical figures listed below remain directly liable for the torture, abuse, and unlawful killing of Armenian POWs.

- **Elchin Guliyev** (Elçin İsa oğlu Quliyev) is the head of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan.
- **Ilham Mehdiyev** (İlham İsmayıl oğlu Mehdiyev) is the deputy head of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan.
- **Vusal Sultanov** (Vüsal Eynulla oğlu Sultanov) is the commander of the Rapid Response Unit of the SBS.
- Other key figures in the State Border Service of Azerbaijan are **Azad Alakbarov** (Azad Ələkbərov), **İsmayil Akbarov** (İsmayıl Bayram oğlu Əkbərov) and **Ramin Bagirov** (Ramin Sabir oğlu Bagirov).
- **Vasif Məmmədov** is Chief of the Military Police of the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan (AZ1117, Natəvan 1, Binəqədi, Bakı, Azerbaijan).
- **Elnur İsmayilov** is Chief of Baku Pre-Trial Detention Facility (AZ1104, Bakı şəhəri, Zabrat, Azerbaijan), which is under the authority of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- **Fikrat Məmmədov** (Fikrət Fərrux oğlu Məmmədov) is the Minister of Justice of Azerbaijan Republic.
- **Fəqan Yaqubov** (Fəqan Vaqif oğlu Yaqubov) is the Chief of Baku Investigative Isolator and Temporary Detention facility, which is under the authority of the State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- **Ali Nağhiyev** (Əli Nağı oğlu Nağıyev) is the Chief of State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- **Heydar Mirza** is the author of the Caliber.az media project and a probable witness of the Incident.

## XI. Conclusion

The Kovsakan Incident led by Azerbaijani state officials and institutions resulted in the intentional killings, torturing, forced disappearance, as well as mutilation of dead bodies of 41 Armenian personnel. These actions amount to blatant violations of international human rights and war crimes, requiring accountability.



## XII. Annex

Links to the videos mentioned in the report

Video 1 - [bit.ly/3jla6KC](https://bit.ly/3jla6KC)

Video 2 - [bit.ly/2Vty3XY](https://bit.ly/2Vty3XY)

Video 3 - [bit.ly/3A8fjvT](https://bit.ly/3A8fjvT)

Video 3 (different source) - [bit.ly/3imdfuc](https://bit.ly/3imdfuc)

Video 4 - [bit.ly/3xnwFDw](https://bit.ly/3xnwFDw)

Video 4 (different source) - [bit.ly/3jpdZxV](https://bit.ly/3jpdZxV)

Videos 2, 3 and 4 synchronized - [bit.ly/3fvNzJU](https://bit.ly/3fvNzJU)

Video 5 - [bit.ly/3ijwtRk](https://bit.ly/3ijwtRk)

Video 6 - [bit.ly/3itxIO5](https://bit.ly/3itxIO5)

Video 7 - [bit.ly/3xiSMLj](https://bit.ly/3xiSMLj)

Video 8 - [bit.ly/3A97I07](https://bit.ly/3A97I07)

Video 9 - [bit.ly/3yVaFjP](https://bit.ly/3yVaFjP)

Video 10 - [bit.ly/3kXSLs1](https://bit.ly/3kXSLs1)

Video 11 - [bit.ly/3tyvp05](https://bit.ly/3tyvp05)

Video of Arsen Karapetyan - [bit.ly/3iAFh5m](https://bit.ly/3iAFh5m)

Video of Norik Arakelyan - [bit.ly/3xDPfay](https://bit.ly/3xDPfay)

Video of Artak Andriasyan - [bit.ly/2VMYKr1](https://bit.ly/2VMYKr1)

Video of Aleksandr Yeghiazaryan - <https://bit.ly/3yaSA2D>