

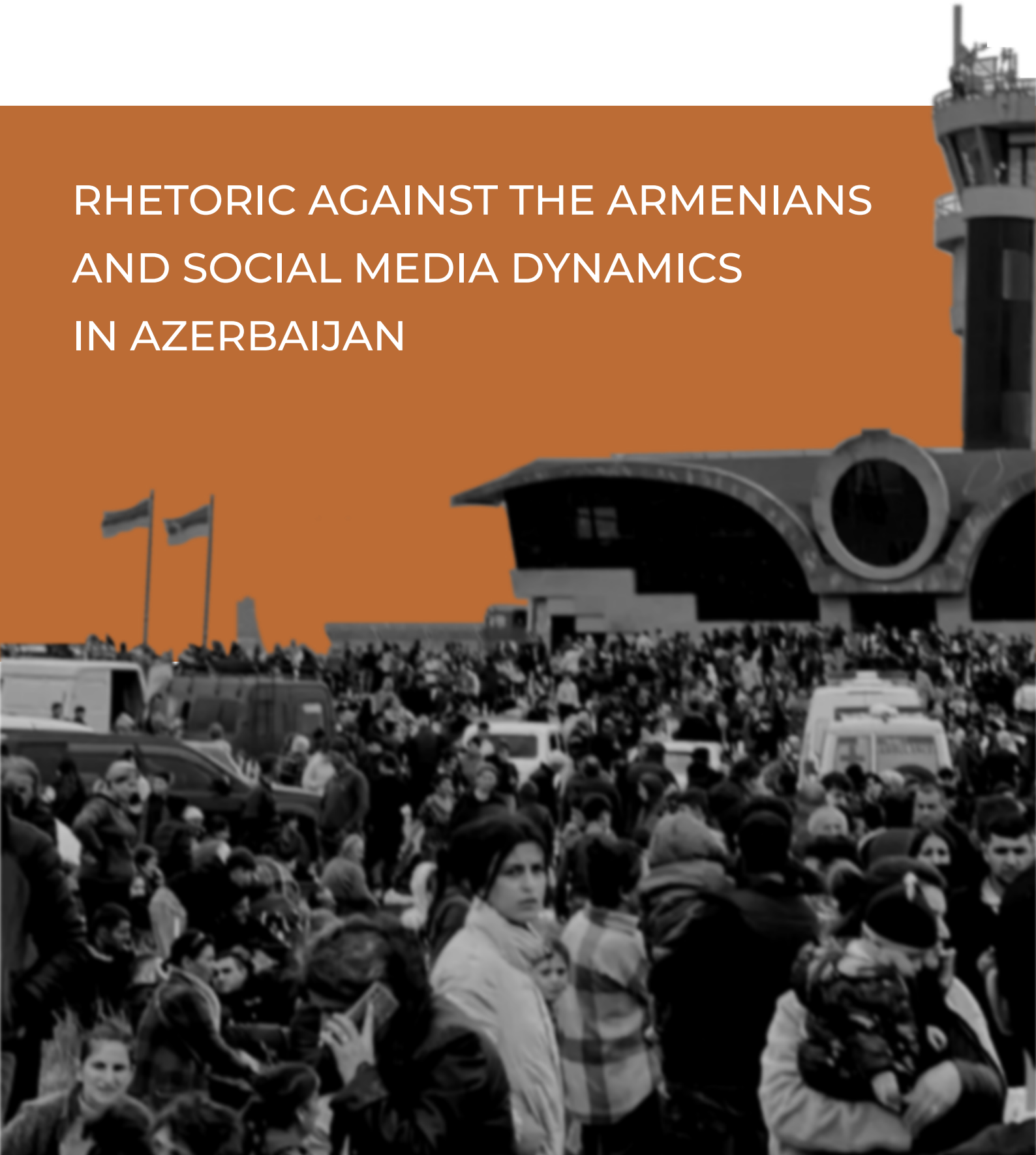


INTERNATIONAL AND  
COMPARATIVE LAW  
CENTER - ARMENIA



ARMENIAN LEGAL  
CENTER FOR JUSTICE  
AND HUMAN RIGHTS

# RHETORIC AGAINST THE ARMENIANS AND SOCIAL MEDIA DYNAMICS IN AZERBAIJAN



This report uses qualitative analysis to identify public statements, content, and comments shared between 1 August 2023 to 8 October 2023<sup>1</sup> by Azerbaijani authorities as well as the general public, available on official websites and open sources. The purpose is to understand the narratives built by government officials and how they translate into the collective mind of Azerbaijani society, through social media, with a special emphasis on cases from the time period chosen for this report.

First, this report examines the speeches, statements, and press releases made by senior officials of Azerbaijan to assess the extent of derogatory or hateful comments towards Armenians. The data is collected from official state websites, such as the website of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence etc., which post press releases and transcripts of speeches from international meetings and domestic events. Comments by members of the Azerbaijani government in official statements carry significant weight as they represent the state's official stance. It is crucial to recognize that government officials are bound by ethical considerations and diplomatic norms. The presence of any discernible hatred within official statements creates ground for evaluating the possibility of the government's involvement in and the sponsoring of anti-Armenian propaganda and deepening of Armenophobic sentiments.

Azerbaijani official statements are twofold. Initially, Azerbaijani senior official statements are classified into two major categories: (1) attitudes and characteristics; and (2) threats and calls for action. "Attitudes and characteristics" include derogatory assertions about the nature or behaviour inherent to Armenians. "Calls for action" include calls for the expulsion and extermination of Armenians from their settlements, as well as calls for Azerbaijan's allies to take joint action against Armenia. "Threats" are, for example, Azerbaijan's plans to open the "Zangezur Corridor" to the Nakhchivan Region through the territory of the Republic of Armenia without the consent of Armenia.<sup>2</sup> Another example is the Azerbaijani plans to return to their

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1. The specific timeframe chosen covers the period before September two-day war and the final exodus of the Armenian population of Artsakh.

2. For a few years in a row the President of Azerbaijan has insisted in his public speeches and discussions on the necessity of opening the so-called "Zangezur Corridor" that would allow Azerbaijan to be connected with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through the territory of the Republic of Armenia. The Armenian side, on the other hand, till this day excludes the possibility of having a Corridor through its territory. Numerously, the President of Azerbaijan as well as a number of government officials and representatives publicly threatened to open the corridor by force. For instance, in a statement from January 1, 2023, Ilham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan, declares: "The opening of Zangezur Corridor will become a reality whether Armenia wants it, or not." (Full footage available at: <https://youtu.be/yt8Cqk6TlxU> ). In Another statement from January 10, 2023, Ilham Aliyev says: "The time has come to speak more openly about our return to Zangezur. We never initiate things that are unreachable." (Full footage available at: <https://shorturl.at/cmVY7> ). In recent statements, however, especially from the period chosen for this research, the authorities of Azerbaijan refrain from voicing direct threats for demanding the opening of the Zangezur Corridor.

“historical lands” referring to the territory of the Republic of Armenia.<sup>3</sup> This allows to determine the extent of which Azerbaijani senior officials are outspoken about their territorial demands against the Republic of Armenia, as well as the “official approach” towards Armenians. Next, the intended audience of the statement is evaluated. Studying the targeted audience allows us to determine the volume of the impact of such statements and what influence it might have on the general public in terms of deepening hatred and/or establishing a certain perception of Armenians. Speeches of Azerbaijani senior officials can be classified into two groups based on impact and motivation: statements directed at and developed for the local population and audience have a possibility of further deepening the Armenophobic sentiments among local population, whereas, speeches made before the international arena mostly consist of motivation and elements directed at justifying Azerbaijan’s actions and shifting the responsibility and the blame onto the shoulders of the Armenian side.

Second, this report examines Telegram channels that are predominantly involved with political and military topics, with the purpose of identifying hate speech and violent posts against Armenians. The focus on Telegram is due to its widespread demand in the region. Telegram is the most popular online communication application in Azerbaijan.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the platform’s lax enforcement policies allow for spreading hate speech, dehumanising, derogatory language, and violence-inducing content, including photos and videos. Moreover, during the 2020 Artsakh war, Telegram was heavily used throughout the whole period of military operations and afterwards, the channel ending up transforming into a major platform for sharing news (both real and fake), violent content, etc. We evaluate the posts and comments based on two major categories: (1) attitudes and characteristics; (2) threats and calls for action. Content is analysed to examine whether there are different approaches to “Armenian-hate” rhetoric. The data is collected from Telegram channels and includes text, images, and videos.

By examining official speeches, press releases and statements of Azerbaijani senior officials, we can conclude that only assertions regarding attitudes and characteristics inherent to Armenians have been found for the time frame specifically chosen for this research. The most recurring themes are: (1) the obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian aid; (2) Armenian efforts to engage in terrorism; and (3) the puppet separatist regime in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. It is important to explain each of those themes contextually.

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3. January 13, 2024, Ilham Aliyev states: “In 1918, a day after the establishment of the democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, the city of Irevan [the capital of the Republic of Armenia], unfortunately, was handed over to Armenia, although there were no reasons for that. It’s an ancient Azerbaijani city.” Just like in the case of the Zangezur Corridor, for the period chosen for this research, the authorities of Azerbaijan refrained from voicing direct territorial demands to the Republic of Armenia.

4 <https://www.similarweb.com/apps/top/google/store-rank/az/communication/top-free/>

First, since December, 2022, Azerbaijan had been blocking the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. In July within the scope of the already-ongoing blockade, Azerbaijan blocked the delivery of humanitarian aid by the International Committee of the Red Cross.<sup>5</sup> Many international actors have called on Azerbaijan to guarantee unimpeded movement along Lachin in both directions.<sup>6</sup> However, Jeyhun Bayramov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has blamed Armenia for obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance at least twice.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, the statements where he accused Armenia of obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance were made at the General Debate of the 78<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and the 9422<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the UN Security Council.<sup>8</sup> Hence, these statements are significantly more impactful as they reach a global audience. A briefing for the diplomatic corps accredited in the Republic of Azerbaijan had also been issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the participation of the Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs of the Presidential Administration Hikmat Hajiyeu, Representative of the President of Azerbaijan on special assignments Elchin Amirbayov and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Fariz Rzayev. This briefing had significant effects as it reached the representatives of other states and again accused Armenia of the politicization of humanitarian aid.<sup>9</sup> By blaming Armenia for the politicization and obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian aid, Azerbaijan was effectively avoiding responsibility for its actions.

Second, multiple members of the Azerbaijani government, including the President of the Azerbaijan Republic, characterize the unrecognized state of the NKR as a terrorist organisation.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly problematic as the NKR has never been listed by the UN or any other relevant international body as a terrorist organization. Moreover, in the case of a

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5. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/azerbaijan-armenia-sides-must-reach-humanitarian-consensus-to-ease-suffering>

6. Lachin Corridor Must Be Reopened for Humanitarian Aid, Security Council Hears, as Speakers Urge Armenia, Azerbaijan to Normalize Relations, 16 August 2023, available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15384.doc.htm>; Summary of the Order of 22 February 2023, paragraph 67, 22 February 2023, available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/202558>

7. This is an example of influencing the international community and placing the responsibility for the situation on the shoulders of the Armenian side.

8. No. 546/23, Statement by Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the General Debate of the 78<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, 23 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no54623>; No. 533/23, Statement by Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the 9422<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the UN Security Council, 23 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no53323>

9. No. 503/23, Press release on the briefing for the diplomatic corps accredited in the Republic of Azerbaijan on the latest situation in the region, 18 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no50323>

10. Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation, 20 September 2023, available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/61113>; No. 503/23, Press release on the briefing for the diplomatic corps accredited in the Republic of Azerbaijan on the latest situation in the region, 18 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no50323>; Defence Ministers of Azerbaijan and Türkiye had a telephone conversation, 19 September 2023, available at: <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/defense-ministers-of-azerbaijan-and-turkiye-had-a-telephone-conversation-49369.html>

declaration of independence<sup>11</sup> made in violation of international law, the UN Security Council calls for an international non-recognition of the declaration of independence, such as in the cases of Rhodesia,<sup>12</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina,<sup>13</sup> and Cyprus.<sup>14</sup> Such a call has never been made in the case of NKR. There are no grounds to prevent nations from exercising their right to self-determination.

Third, Jeyhun Bayramov's statement about Armenia and its puppet regimes implies Armenia artificially created the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.<sup>15</sup> This narrative of Armenia's puppet regime is commonly found in other press releases issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.<sup>16</sup> Accusations against Armenia of fuelling separatism in the region are commonly found jointly with the accusations of establishing a puppet regime.<sup>17</sup> These narratives are best exemplified by quotes such as *"The puppet separatist regime is the consequence of the aggression and ethnic cleansing policy that continued for nearly 30 years,"*<sup>18</sup> or *"...the main goal of Armenia, ..., and its puppet regime is to escalate military tensions in the region and to engage in terrorism."*<sup>19</sup> These narratives of subordinate puppet regime and separatism pose an issue because Azerbaijan is likely attempting to convey that Armenia has artificially created the regime in Nagorno-Karabakh to violate Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

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11. Historically, Nagorno-Karabakh was never part of Azerbaijan - only after 1918 after the collapse of the Russian Empire did Azerbaijan even appear on the political map. Pogroms and violence were perpetrated against the Armenian population by the Azerbaijani military between May 1918 and April 1920. 40,000 Armenians in Shushi were massacred and displaced. After the region was Sovietized in 1920, Nagorno-Karabakh was included within the borders of Azerbaijan as an autonomous region (against the will of the people). There were social, economic, and cultural policies of discrimination and repression during the entire Soviet period. For this reason the demographics changed from 94.4% (1923) to 76.9% (1989). The population of Nagorno-Karabakh applied many times requesting to join Nagorno-Karabakh with Soviet Armenia, for example with petitions signed by tens of thousands of people in 1965 and 1987. In 1988 the Sumgait massacres against Armenians took place in Azerbaijan, following pogroms of the remaining Armenians in Baku in 1990. Thus Nagorno-Karabakh became the only region that was not yet ethnically cleansed of Armenians. It became clear that Armenians could not safely live under an Azerbaijani government. Then in 1991, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, and Armenia, separately, declared their independence followed by a referendum for the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. The initial Bolshevik decision to annex Nagorno-Karabakh to Soviet Armenia was without authority and further voided by Azerbaijan's later independence in 1991.

12. The Security Council in the case of Southern Rhodesia decided to "call upon all States not to recognize this illegal racist minority regime in Southern Rhodesia" (SC Resolution 216 (1965), 12 November 1965, paragraph 2) and called upon "all States ... not to entertain any diplomatic or other relations with it" (SC Resolution 217 (1965), 20 November 1965, paragraph 6).

13. In the case of the Republika Srpska the Security Council strongly affirmed "that any entities unilaterally declared or arrangements imposed in contravention [of the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina] will not be accepted" (SC Resolution 787 (1992), UN Doc. S/RES/787, 16 November 1992, paragraph 3).

14. Security Council Resolution 541 explicitly deplored "the declaration of the Turkish Cypriot authorities of the purported secession of part of the Republic of Cyprus" and described it as "invalid". The Security Council further called upon all States "not to recognize any Cypriot State other than the Republic of Cyprus" (SC Resolution 541, 18 November 1983, paragraphs 1, 2 and 7).

15. No: 533/23, Statement by Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the 9422nd Meeting of the UN Security Council, 23 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no53323>

16. No: 504/23, Press release on the death of civilians and the personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as a result of landmine terror in Khojaved, 19 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no50423>; No: 474/23, Statement on the illegal activities named as "elections" by the puppet regime created by Armenia in the Garabag region of Azerbaijan, 9 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no47423>

17. No: 503/23, Press release on the briefing for the diplomatic corps accredited in the Republic of Azerbaijan on the latest situation in the region, 18 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no50323>; No: 533/23, Statement by Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the 9422nd Meeting of the UN Security Council, 23 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no53323>; No: 474/23, Statement on the illegal activities named as "elections" by the puppet regime created by Armenia in the Garabag region of Azerbaijan, 9 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no47423>

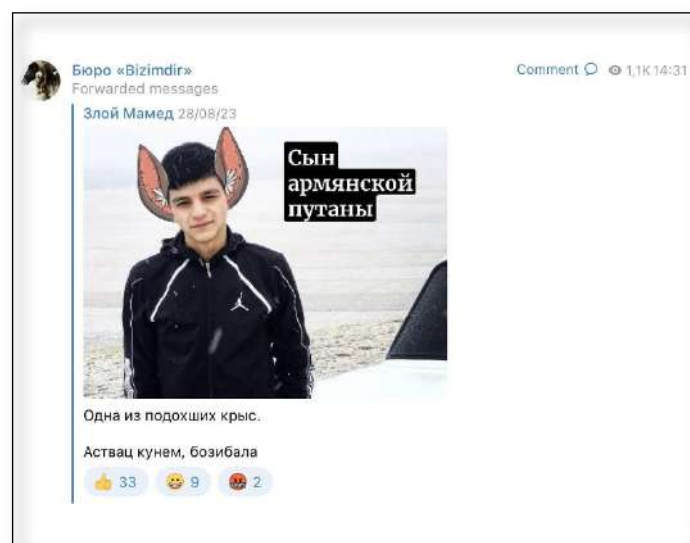
18. No: 474/23, Statement on the illegal activities named as "elections" by the puppet regime created by Armenia in the Garabag region of Azerbaijan, 9 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no47423>

19. No: 504/23, Press release on the death of civilians and the personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as a result of landmine terror in Khojaved, 19 September 2023, available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/news/no50423>

Identifying such a number of problematic speeches and statements within a short period (August-October, 2023) is rather alarming, given the fact that Azerbaijani government officials ought to use diplomatic language. Additionally, the fact that some of the most problematic speeches we analyzed were designed to target an international audience is noteworthy because it demonstrates that Azerbaijani government officials do not constrain themselves with ethical considerations and diplomatic norms but openly spread hatred towards Armenians even on international forums and discussions. Importantly, Azerbaijani government officials do not differentiate between gender, age, or place of residence in terms of the rhetoric used. Rather, they address all Armenians as a group and generalize their statements and perceptions of the nation.

Subsequently, we assessed Telegram posts and comments to determine the correlation between official statements and social media. We conclude that, for the period of time chosen for this research, a significantly more aggressive anti-Armenian rhetoric is used on Telegram compared to official statements and speeches of the authorities of Azerbaijan. Attitudes and characteristics make up 51% of anti-Armenian rhetoric, while threats and calls for action make up the remaining 49%.

Unlike the statements of the Azerbaijani officials from the period chosen, posts and comments on Telegram channels vary in nature regarding the anti-Armenian rhetoric used. Attitudes and characteristics include dehumanising expressions such as “rats” or “donkey” targeting men specifically, while calls for sexual violence target children and young women. However, the most common posts on Telegram are calls for indiscriminate killing of all Armenians and completing the genocide.



### Example 1<sup>20</sup>

- Son of an Armenian whore  
[text in the picture]
- One of the dead rats.  
Fuck Astvats<sup>21</sup>, son of a bitch

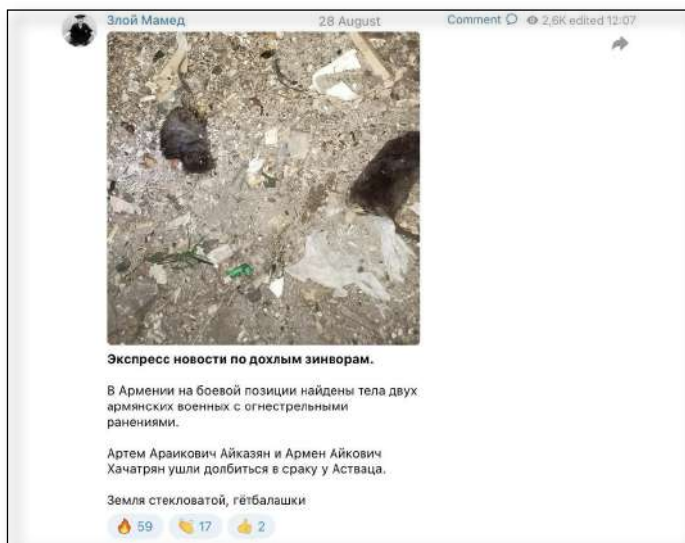
20. <https://t.me/c/1751366651/8634>

21. Christian Armenians call their God “Astvats.” Taking into consideration a major difference of religious perceptions and belongings of Armenian and Azerbaijani nations, and a long history of hatred and bullying also based on religious identification, this statement may be perceived as an example of an Armenophobic rhetoric based on a religious sentiment.



### Example 2<sup>22</sup>

- Queue of Armenian women for Azeri nuts.
- Armenian ethnic whores (for all tastes) are leaving Karabakh
- [comment] not one bitch looks like starving)<sup>23</sup>
- [comment] these creatures think that as soon as we clean our lands from filth and scum our soldiers can fuck this scum)))))) wrong hai [trans. loud screams]! Our soldiers will not get near these stinking sluts within a kilometre without a cameo and Head & Shoulders! Armenians [Armenian women] are the dirtiest AIDS whores! A thousand times worse than Natashas [Russian women]!!! Homeless rot, anyway))))
- [comment] hairy gypsies)



### Example 3<sup>24</sup>

- Express news on dead zinvors [trans. Armenian military men].  
The bodies of two Armenian military men with gunshot wounds have been found in Armenia at a combat position.  
Artem Araikovich Haykazyan and Armen Haykovich Khachatryan went to fuck in Astvats' (God's) ass.<sup>25</sup>  
Wishing for torment in the afterlife



### Example 4<sup>26</sup>

- In Khojaly, Armenian cattle is waiting to be evacuated from Karabakh.  
[Wipe yourselves out]

22. <https://t.me/c/1751366651/8552>

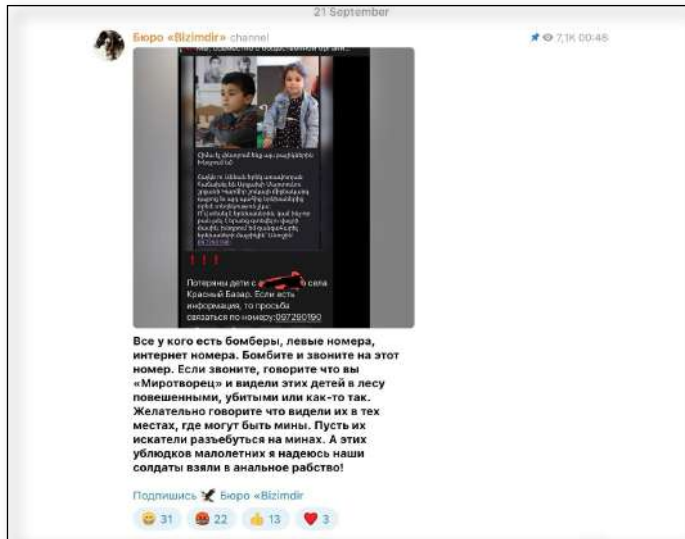
23. During the period of the blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan, the population of Artsakh experienced a massive shortage of vital necessities such as food, medicine, water, gas, electricity, etc. Here, the statement tries to evaluate the level of starvation the population was subjected to, further elaborating that "it does not seem like the Artsakh population was starving as a result of the blockade."

24. Archived, since deleted

25. Another example of a religious sentiment mocking on Christian religious identification.

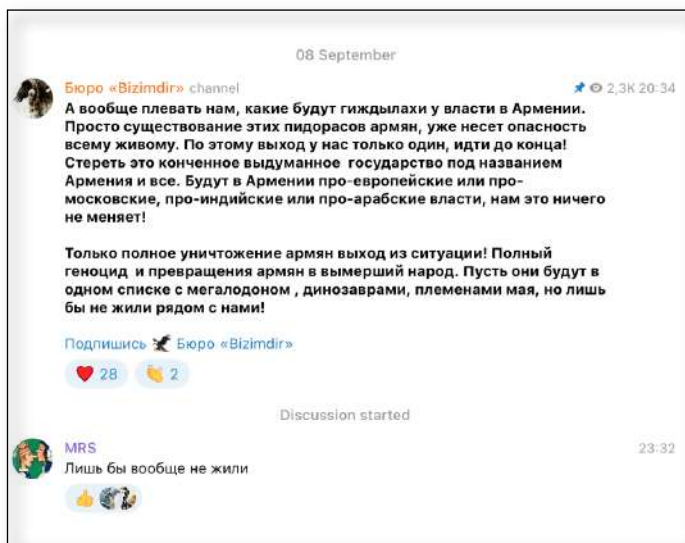
26. [https://t.me/zloy\\_mamed\\_az/2728](https://t.me/zloy_mamed_az/2728)





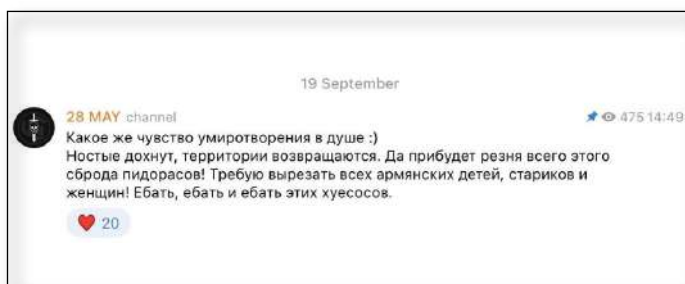
### Example 5<sup>27</sup>

- Anyone with bombers, side numbers, internet numbers. Spam and call this number. If you call, say that you are a "Peacekeeper" and have seen these children in the forest hanged, killed, or whatever. Preferably say you saw them in places where there might be mines. Let their searching personnel get fucked up by mines. And I hope our soldiers took these juvenile bastards into anal slavery!



### Example 6<sup>28</sup>

- In general, we don't care what kind of faggots will be in power in Armenia. Just the existence of these faggots Armenians is already a danger to all living things. That's why we have only one way out, to go till the end! Erase this fictitious state called Armenia and that's it. Whether the authorities in Armenia are pro-European or pro-Moscow, pro-Indian or pro-Arab, it makes no difference to us! Only total annihilation of Armenians is the way out of the situation! Completing the genocide and turning Armenians into an extinct people. Let them be on the same list as the megalodons, dinosaurs, and Maya tribes, but only if they don't coexist with us!
- [comment] As long as they don't live at all



### Example 7<sup>29</sup>

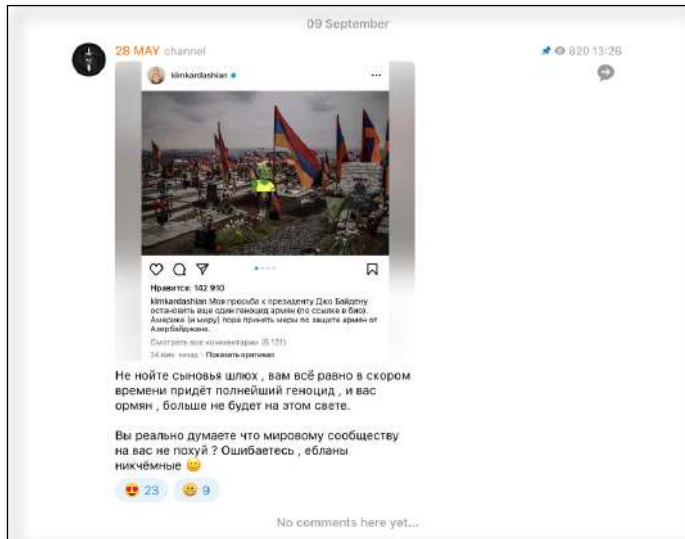
- What a feeling of peace in the soul :) The '90s are dying, the territories are returning to us. May the massacre of all this rabble of faggots become a reality! I demand the slaughter of all Armenian children, old men, and women! Fuck, fuck, and fuck these cocksuckers.

27. [https://t.me/Bizimdir\\_Biuro/2170](https://t.me/Bizimdir_Biuro/2170)

28. [https://t.me/Bizimdir\\_Biuro/2079](https://t.me/Bizimdir_Biuro/2079)

29. <https://t.me/team28may/6843>





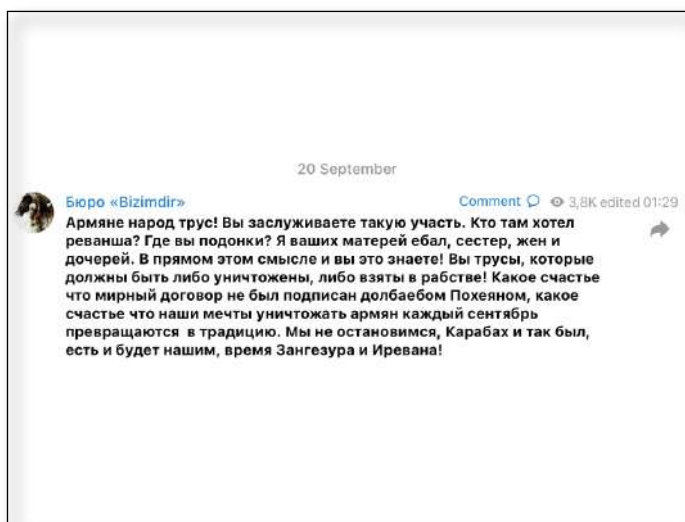
### Example 8<sup>30</sup>

- Don't whine, sons of whores, you will soon be completely exterminated anyway, and you Armenians will no longer exist in this world.
- Do you really think the international community gives a fuck about you? You're wrong, you worthless fucks



### Example 9<sup>31</sup>

- No!!! Armenians, we don't think so! We don't want and are not going to live together with Armenians ... Get the fuck out of Karabakh. And we will come back to Iravan, Zangezur and other historical lands of ours!



### Example 10<sup>32</sup>

- Armenians are a nation of cowards! You deserve this fate. Who was it that wanted revenge? Where are you scum? I fucked your mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters. Literally, and you know it! You are cowards who should be either destroyed or taken as slaves! What a blessing that the peace treaty was not signed by fucking Poheyan [referring to Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia], what a blessing that our dreams of annihilating Armenians every September turn into a tradition. We will not stop, Karabakh was, is, and will be ours, now it's time for Zangezur and Irevan!

30. <https://t.me/team28may/6809>  
 31. <https://t.me/Black1Chat/15842>  
 32. [https://t.me/Bizimdir\\_Biuro/2148](https://t.me/Bizimdir_Biuro/2148)

Analyzed official statements made by members of the Azerbaijani government include only attitudes and characteristics. The narratives of the statements are probably strategically employed to shift blame, deflect responsibility, and fuel sentiments against Armenians. Notably, the use of such rhetoric on international platforms indicates a disregard for ethical considerations and diplomatic norms, and the expressions used demonstrate a disturbing level of deep-rooted hatred. However, we came across a shift in rhetoric of Azerbaijani senior officials, the latter refraining from using direct calls for action in their statements and speeches from the period chosen for this report. The study of Telegram channels exposes a more aggressive and diverse anti-Armenian rhetoric. While attitudes and characteristics remain a significant component, the prevalence of explicit threats, calls for violence, and even genocidal language is alarming. The correlation between official statements and social media content is apparent, with Telegram channels amplifying and intensifying the anti-Armenian rhetoric.