

31 years pass since Azerbaijani journalist Salatyn Asgarova was killed by Armenian military formations

On January 9th, 1991, Salatyn Asgarova, performing her professional duties as the correspondent of the "Molodezh Azerbaijan" ("The Youth of Azerbaijan") newspaper, died at the hands of Armenian militants. She was the first journalist in Azerbaijan who died in the First Karabakh War and the first female journalist to receive the title of National Hero of Azerbaijan.



On January 9th, at 5 a.m., 12 Armenians armed with machine guns took up positions on the fifth kilometer of the Lachin-Shusha mountain road waiting for the military vehicle

“UAZ-469”. Around 8:20-8:30 a.m., when the vehicle pulled into the bridge, three Armenian militants blocked it. They fired point-blank at the vehicle in no time. Automatic fire followed from all directions. Journalist Salatyn Asgarova and three Soviet army servicemen were killed in the attack: battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Oleg Larionov, Major Igor Ivanov, the Chief of Staff of the Lachin region commandant’s office, and Sergeant Ivan Goyek.

[\[“Molodezh Azerbaijana” newspaper, 18.04.1992, No.35 \(11024\) p.3\]](#)

[\[“Literaturnaya Gazeta” newspaper, 13.02.91, No.6 \(5332\) p.2\]](#)

[\[Yu.A. Pompeyev. “Karabakh’s Bloody Maelstrom”. 1992, pp.59-60\]](#)

According to the book titled “Karabakh’s Bloody Maelstrom” (1992) by Russian writer and member of the Union of Writers of Russia Yuri Pompeyev:

“They were shot almost point-blank with machine guns and a sniper rifle from two directions – along their movement and from behind on the left. Three of them – the driver I.Goyek, Major I.Ivanov, sitting next to him, and journalist S. Asgarova – died on scene. 113 shot holes were counted on the vehicle: such was the intensity of hostile fire.”

[\[Yu.A. Pompeyev. “Karabakh’s Bloody Maelstrom”. 1992, p.60\]](#)

Valery Pavlovich Vorotnikov, the former head of the Soviet Constitutional System Protection Department of KGB of the USSR provided insight into the incident in the “Pravda” newspaper in 1991. He described it as a politically motivated murder.

[\[“Pravda” newspaper, 26.06.1991, No.152 \(26600\) p.4\]](#)

A criminal case for committing premeditated murder was opened against 11 people on the same day by the Prosecutor’s office of the Shusha region of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast of Azerbaijan. The investigation concluded that the terrorist attack was committed by an organized criminal group formed in the summer of 1989 and headed by Andranik Harutyunyan, a student of one of the universities in Yerevan. Arno Mkrtchyan, a physics teacher and the head of the local branch of the

“AMARAS” “charitable” society, was the deputy of the group’s head in Galadarasi, Kirov and Yeghtsahogh villages. He, along with Velen Simonyan, the director of one of the schools, equipped an arms depot full of weapons, ammunition, and explosives. Velen Simonyan was among those who attacked the military vehicle with Salatyn Asgarova.

[\[“Molodezh Azerbaijan” newspaper, 18.04.1992, No.35 \(11024\) p.3\]](#)

[\[“Bakinskiy Rabochiy” newspaper, 04.03.1992, No.46 \(22325\) p.2\]](#)

According to the testimony of accused Arvid Mangasaryan:

“On January 8th, 1991, around 11 p.m., the chairperson of the Stepanakert Executive Committee Semyon Babayan called the communications unit, where I was covering for the telephone operator, and asked to get him on the phone with Andranik Harutyunyan and actress Zhanna Galstyan who were in Kirov village. They talked, and I was called to the headquarters shortly. About 15 people, our men and newcomers, have already gathered there. A little later, Arno and Zhanna Galstyan arrived driving a UAZ vehicle. She said that a mission had been assigned. She selected the participants single-handedly, including me. She ordered to engage “experienced people” from the unit in Yeghtsahogh and put Arno in charge.”

[\[“Molodezh Azerbaijan” newspaper, 18.04.1992, No.35 \(11024\) p.3\]](#)

November 6th, 1992. Salatyn Asgarova was posthumously awarded the title of National Hero of Azerbaijan.

[\[“Molodezh Azerbaijan” newspaper, 14.11.1992, No.65 \(11034\) p.1\]](#)

On April 2nd, 1992, the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan sentenced Arno Mkrtchyan, Grachik Petrosyan, Gagik Harutyunyan, Arvid (Arsid) Mangasaryan, and Garnik Arustamanyan to capital punishment, and six others to various imprisonment terms.

[\[“Molodezh Azerbaijan” newspaper, 18.04.1992, No.35 \(11024\) p.3\]](#)

On May 10th, 1996, they were transferred to Armenia as part of the exchange of war prisoners.

[\[“Respublika” newspaper. May 15th, 1996. No. 9., p.1\]](#)