

The Khojaly Tragedy

In the early morning hours of February 26, 1992, the Armenian militias mounted an assault on Khojaly supported by the 366th motorized rifle regiment of the former Soviet Army. Hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians suffered or were killed as the result of this deadly attack. Based on foreign information sources, Qarabag.com prepared a material about the Khojaly massacre, the most fearsome tragedy of the Karabakh War.

The official figures show that the massacre and mass expulsion left 613 Khojaly residents dead (including those who froze to death while trying to escape).

Of these:

- 63 children
- 106 women
- 70 elderly people

8 Azerbaijani families were completely wiped out. 487 people, including 76 children, were wounded, and 1,275 people were taken hostage. 5,379 people were expelled from their homeland. The fate of 150 people taken hostage, including 68 women and 26 children, remains unknown.

The massacre of civilians was the defining moment of the entire Karabakh conflict. It was an act of intimidation to break the spirit of the Azerbaijanis. As explained by one of the central figures of the Karabakh separatists, ex-President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan: "But I think the main point is something different. Before Khojali, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us; they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]."

[\[Thomas de Waal, Black Garden, Moscow, 2005. p. 235\]](#)

They [the Armenian militias] surrounded Khojali on three sides... [and] went in... Only one exit out of Khojali was open –

for Aghdam... In the middle of the night, a large crowd fled through the woods, which were ankle-deep in snow, and started to descend the valley of the small Gargar River. In early morning, the crowd of Khojali civilians, interspersed with a few militiamen, emerged onto open ground near the Armenian village of Nakhichevanik. There they were hit by a wall of gunfire from Armenian fighters on the hillside above.

[\[Thomas de Waal. Black Garden, Moscow, 2005. p. 233\]](#)

A few days later, a terrible aftermath greeted the reporters and investigators who came to these hillsides. Torn bodies littered the snowy ground. Anatol Lieven of The Times noted that "several of them, including one small girl, had terrible injuries: only her face was left."

[\[Thomas de Waal. Black Garden, Moscow, 2005. p. 234\]](#)

On March 4, 1992, 2 video footages were shown in Moscow, filmed by cameraman Chingiz Mustafayev at the site of the mass murder of Khojaly civilians. The footages showed the corpses of civilians. Many of those shot were children from 2 to 15 years old, women and the elderly people. Most of them were shot at close range in the head. It was coldblooded and deliberate murder. There was no sign of a struggle or attempted escape. The video showed bodies of kids with their ears cut off. One old woman had her left half of the face cut off. The men were scalped.

[\[Izvestia newspaper, 04.03.1992, No.54 \(23628\), p. 1\]](#)

A cameraman Yuri Romanov from Russia, who made a video footage for CNN in Khojaly, mentions in his book a little girl with eyes burnt out with cigarettes.

[\[Yuri Romanov "I film a war... A school of survival" 2001, p. 56\]](#)