



**FREEDOM
IN THE
WORLD** **1997
1998**



**The Annual Survey of Political Rights
And Civil Liberties, 1997-1998**

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The findings of *Freedom in the World* and the Map of Freedom include events up to January 1, 1998.

Freedom in the World
The Annual Survey of
Political Rights & Civil Liberties
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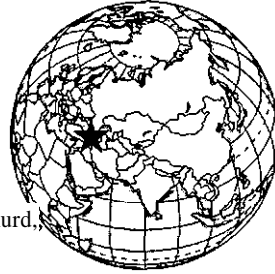
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Armenia/Azerbaijan

Nagorno-Karabakh

Polity: Armenian-occupied **Political Rights:** 5*
Economy: Mixed statist **Civil Liberties:** 6
Population: 150,000 **Status:** Not Free
Ethnic Groups: Armenian (95 percent), Assyrian, Greek, Kurd,
 others



Ratings Change: Nagorno-Karabakh's political rights rating changed from 6 to 5 due to increased mediation in the crisis.

Overview:

Foreign Minister Arkady Gukasyan was elected president of the break-away predominantly Armenian enclave of Azerbaijan in September, replacing Robert Kocharian, who was named prime minister of Armenia in March. The United States joined Russia and France as co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group in trying to mediate the nearly decade-long crisis, but by year's end the Karabakh leadership rejected an incremental, step-by-step approach to the political and military solution agreed upon earlier by Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In 1921, Nagorno-Karabakh was transferred from Armenia and placed under Soviet Azerbaijani jurisdiction by Josef Stalin. Subsequently, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (region) was created, with a narrow strip of land bordering Armenia proper. In 1930, Moscow permitted Azerbaijan to establish and resettle the border areas between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

In 1988, Azeri militia and special forces launched violent repression in response to Karabakh Armenians' call for greater autonomy. In 1991, the legislatures of Nagorno-Karabakh and Shahumyan voted for secession. Multi-party elections were held, and on January 6, 1992 parliament's inaugural session adopted a declaration of independence and elected Artur Mkrtchian president. Following his assassination in April, Vice President Georgi Petrosian became president; he resigned in June 1993 and was replaced by Garen Baburian. In much of 1993-94, parliament did not meet, as many parliamentarians were fighting on the front lines. At the end of 1993, which saw military gains by the Karabakh Armenians, Azeri forces launched offensives in the northern, southern and eastern parts of the enclave. Before a cease-fire was reached in 1994, Karabakh Armenian forces had established military control over Karabakh and six Azerbaijan districts.

In December 1994, the Karabakh Supreme Council—the executive body of parliament—elected Robert Kocharian, head of the state defense committee, to the post of president for a five-year term. The president appointed parliamentarian Leonard Petrossian as prime minister. In January 1995, President Kocharian created a governmental structure consisting of nine ministries, seven state departments and five state enterprises. Elections to a 33-member parliament were held in April and May, with an 80 percent voter turnout. Prior to the vote, a public organization, Democratia, was formed to assist all political parties, unions and other groups in preparation for the elections, which were generally free and fair.

In early 1997, the Karabakh leadership rejected a draft of a Minsk Group pro-

posal that envisaged autonomy for Karabakh within Azerbaijan, the withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied Azerbaijan territory beyond the formal borders of the enclave, the demilitarization of the Karabakh town of Shusha—strategically located overlooking Stepanakert, the capital—the deployment of international peacekeeping forces in the so-called Lachin corridor (the only overland link between Karabakh and Armenia) and the downgrading of the Karabakh army to a local militia.

In September presidential elections, Gukasyan defeated two other candidates, winning 89.3 percent of the vote. The poll was deemed free and fair by 40 international observers, though the election was considered invalid by most of the international community.

In October, leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, attending the Strasbourg summit, agreed to a phased approach to resolving the conflict, beginning with demilitarization of the territory and some autonomy within Azerbaijan. In rejecting the plan, Karabakh officials said it failed to address the legitimate security concerns of the Nagorno-Karabakh population and that a comprehensive "package" solution was preferable.

No progress was reported after a meeting of the Copenhagen conference of OSCE foreign ministers in December.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Residents of Nagorno-Karabakh technically have the means to change their government democratically. Parliamentary elections in the 1995 were generally free and fair, as were the 1996 and 1997 presidential elections. With the exception of Armenia, most of the international community does not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as independent from Azerbaijan.

Years of war have constrained rights and civil liberties. A state of emergency is still in force. Border regions have been subjected to sporadic attacks. Freedom of movement has been curtailed by war, and there are restrictions on assembly and association, as well as self-censorship in the press. With Armenians making up over 95 percent of the country, the Armenian Apostolic Church is the main religion, and the ethnic aspect of the war has constrained the religious rights of the very few Muslims still left in the region. Although international efforts still include discussions about the return of Azeri refugees, Azeri homes and businesses have been expropriated, confiscated or destroyed, mosques have been leveled or remain abandoned and Muslim graves have been desecrated. Armenians occupying Azeri territory have prevented the return of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Azeris.