

Azerbaijan ready to work with Armenia to find missing persons from Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Aytan Farhadova · OC Media · 2026-06-30

An Azerbaijan State Security Service (DTX) official has announced Azerbaijan's readiness to cooperate with Armenia in identifying people who had gone missing during the decades-long Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The official, the DTX's Deputy Chief Sharafat Hasanov, made the remarks during a conference on Tuesday.

The conference, which was titled 'Enhancing Cooperation and Advancing Modern Approaches in Addressing the Issue of Missing Persons', was attended by the chair of the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) Kathryn Bomberger.

During his speech, Hasanov said that 32 mass graves have been discovered after the 2020 Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. He added that the authorities have discovered and exhumed the remains of 893 people.

'The identities of 327 of them have been established through DNA analysis and forensic examination, and the remains of 226 people have been handed over to their families and buried'.

Hasanov stressed that 3,683 people remain unaccounted for. According to official figures, the total number of Azerbaijanis missing during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is 4,010.

He mentioned that 'of the 4,010 missing persons, 3,228 are military personnel and 782 are civilians. Among the civilians, 71 are minors, 288 are women, and 319 are elderly people'.

During his speech, Hasanov stressed that Azerbaijan was 'open to cooperation with the entire world in resolving the issue of missing persons' and declared Azerbaijan's readiness 'to cooperate with the Armenian side in this area'.

However, Hasanov said that Armenia had yet to provide them with any additional information regarding the issue.

In the same conference, Jeyhun Rzayev, a member of the Working Group of the State Commission on Prisoners of War, Missing Persons, and Hostages, stated that the first meeting with their Armenian counterparts on this issue took place in February 2025. He also claimed that Armenia has not provided Azerbaijan with the information it needed.

'[In] order to help clarify the fate of missing persons of Armenian descent, Azerbaijan offered to provide DNA profiles of their family members', Rzayev said, adding that 'the Armenian side stated that it would study the materials provided and provide the Azerbaijani side with relevant information, but no information has been provided to date'.

According to the Armenian International Commission on Missing Persons, as of July 2023, was reported that 777 Armenians are still considered missing from the First Nagorno-Karabakh War and subsequent escalations, while 195 persons, including 20 civilians, are still considered missing from the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

There are also 42 missing persons from Nagorno-Karabakh following Azerbaijan's final assault on the region.

In an interview with pro-government media outlet APA, the ICMP's Bomberger said that her organisation had transferred a database to the Azerbaijani government which she hopes 'will serve as a means of strengthening cooperation between governments and sharing important information on the possible whereabouts of missing persons on both sides'.

Giving an example from the former Yugoslavia, Bomberger stated that Balkan countries 'established a joint working group on missing persons and launched an active database system in 2021 through which information can be shared'.

'The ICMP also supports Azerbaijan in DNA analysis. This is one of ICMP's core competencies. We are very pleased to have the opportunity to help Azerbaijan and Armenia enhance their technical skills', Bomberger said.

Additionally, she said qualified forensic experts from Armenia and Azerbaijan were hosted by the organisation in their laboratories in the Netherlands.

However, she mentioned that 'the greatest challenge is usually extracting DNA from skeletal remains' which have been severely degraded over many years.

To conduct search operations 'more quickly, efficiently, and accurately', the Azerbaijani authorities plan to purchase specialised underground radar surveillance systems in 2027.

Gazanfar Ahmadov, the Secretary of the State Commission for Prisoners of War, Missing Persons, and Hostages, said that such systems 'can detect large underground objects, including human remains'.

On Tuesday, the remains of six Azerbaijanis missing and killed in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War were buried, four of whom were military personnel, while two were civilians.

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