

REPORT

RETURN OF AZERBAIJANI REFUGEES TO ARMENIA

Analysis of deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia and policy proposals for the return of Azerbaijanis to their homeland



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Introduction

Three years after the end of the Second Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the issue of refugees returning to their homes remains unresolved. Despite multiple efforts in the diplomatic arena, Armenia has been unwilling to comprehensively engage with the Azerbaijani government on the matter. The forced displacement endured by Azerbaijanis were a consequence of conflicts with Armenia and various events that unfolded during the Soviet rule.

Multiple internal and external factors are at play, impacting the dynamic of the negotiations and the general level of trust. The strategic significance of the South Caucasus as a region hints at the considerable role played by the individual interests of several major powers, with their strategies and preferences undoubtedly impacting the bilateral relationship. Equally, internal dynamics, such as Armenia's approach to recognizing Azerbaijan's sovereignty in its constitutional documents, raises concerns about the prospect of solving the issue at hand given its deeply emotive and even personal nature.

Undoubtedly, the geopolitical 'reality' on the ground has changed radically. Following Azerbaijan's military success in the Second Karabakh War and its restoration of its territorial integrity, the country's strategic position has strengthened considerably. This should instill hope in the minds of displaced Azerbaijanis, with the prospect of this issue being resolved certainly benefitting from more favorable conditions than ever before. Concepts like repatriation must be viewed as an essential part of the peace process, especially if the solving of this issue is to contribute to ensuring long-term security in the region. Recent signals from official rhetoric, however, put in doubt the extent to which the Armenian side is willing to work with Azerbaijan on this particular issue. This is further complicated by the fact that many international policy-makers and experts only raise the issue of Armenians returning to Karabakh region of Azerbaijan while ignoring the fate of the Azerbaijanis deported from Armenia. This is a one-sided and biased approach which clearly impedes peace and reconciliation.

This paper will offer an overview of the state of the current policy, describing its key features and suggesting possible alternatives. This will be done in accordance with four criteria, developed for this research. Several key aspects of the resolution of the issues must also be determined. This includes the location(s) to which Azerbaijanis would be returning to, the mechanisms required to guarantee their safety and societal integration, and their relationship with Armenian governmental bodies to ensure a fair application of human and constitutional rights. An equally important aspect is their ability to participate in political and social life once their re-integration is complete. Given the broad range of these factors, a committee is likely to be required that is responsible for this process.

The paper will consist of five separate sections. The first section will offer an in-depth overview of the issue, followed by a historical assessment tracing the historical roots of the problem in the second section. The following section will present and interpret information from group data and survey

findings, supported by interviews with people able to shed light and express their views on key issues and potential future modification of the policy. Afterwards, several solutions to the underlying issues will be proposed. This has helped establish a preliminary framework for the return of Azerbaijanis to Armenia, which crucially involves the establishment of a joint commission, the provision of adequate housing, the guarantee of access to basic services, the facilitation of economic reintegration, the restitution of stolen property, and the promotion of inter-community dialogue. Finally, in the concluding sections, an evaluation of the policy's usefulness, rationality, adaptability, and efficacy will follow. Relevant recommendations, deduced from the analysis of the policy's effectiveness, will be offered in the conclusion. It should also be noted that the evaluation will take into consideration the political ramifications of the proposed alternatives, ensuring an all-encompassing review of a policy that should result in the formalization of the return of Azerbaijanis to their respective homelands.

Methodology

The empirical research conducted in support of the study involves a thorough examination of the relevant literature and data, collected primarily through the above-mentioned interviews. Academic literature and other relevant resources were examined as an initial step in the research process. The interviews conducted were with several citizens of Azerbaijan who had lived in Armenia and had first-hand knowledge of the deportation enforced on Azerbaijanis. The transcripts of these interviews were analyzed thematically, helping with the formulation of relevant conclusions. Even though the data sample is in fact small, and more research and data should be relied upon in the future, the sample is sufficient to represent the average ‘median’ line about the life of Azerbaijanis in Armenia.

Overview of the History of Deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia

The deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia is a critical aspect of the region's history. In the territories that formerly belonged to the Iravan Khanate, an anti-Azerbaijani policy was first implemented when the region became a province of Tsarist Russia with the signing of the Turkmenchay Treaty in 1828 (Khan, 2020). Tsarism influenced the turning of Armenians against Muslims during the revolution of 1905 (Bayramzadeh, & Kazimi, 2020). Interestingly, only five of the 54 districts in the Caucasus were mostly Armenian (Isgenderli, 2011).

Armenian attacks on Yerevan and other cities and towns with Azerbaijani populations led to massacres, the destruction of homes, and forced displacement. Tsarist Russia's policy of national and religious discrimination exacerbated tensions between native Azerbaijanis and Armenians, which in turn negatively influenced and damaged the edifice of regional politics. In the first part of the nineteenth century, many Armenians relocated to modern-day Azerbaijan and Armenia from Qajar Persia and Ottoman Empire (Altstadt, 2013; Shafiyev 2018). Armenian military organizations relied on violence against the Turks in the early 20th century, which tragically led to the death of many Azerbaijanis and the subsequent forced displacement of their families from their homeland. Expulsion of Azerbaijanis from their territories was a regular occurrence over the past two centuries, with one example of relocation from the territory of Armenian SSR in 1948-1953 (Shafiyev, 2019). This affected around 200,000 Azerbaijanis, resulting in a serious deterioration of their living conditions in other parts of the country (Shukurov, 2010).

First Stage of Deportation, 1918-1920

The practice of deporting Azerbaijanis from Armenia was first implemented as early as 1918–1920. The vision of “Greater Armenia” was the driving force behind the aggressive policy and attitude towards Azerbaijanis (Hasanov, 2013). There was a widespread assumption that “Greater Armenia” could be established by force. For this to happen, ‘outlanders’, in this case Muslims (and therefore Azerbaijanis) had to be displaced from the lands. This would help with the establishment of cultural homogeneity. In parallel with the genocide of Azerbaijanis in spring of 1918, perpetrated by Bolshevik and Dashnak militants of the Baku Council, similar events unfolded in the uyezds (districts) of the Iravan Governorate. The Dashnak regime killed or forcefully evicted 565,000 Azerbaijani Turks between 1918 and 1920 (Shukurov, 2010). Around sixty percent of Azerbaijanis perished during the two years of Dashnak administration in 1918-1920 (Ibrahim, 2016).

Second Stage of Deportation, 1948-1953

The second wave of Azerbaijani deportations from Armenia took place between 1948 and 1953. Hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were once again forcefully displaced against their will, on this occasion by Soviet authorities. Two key decisions were taken by the Soviet Union's Council of Ministers that facilitated this process (Karimli, 2023). The first decision, No. 4083 in official Soviet documentation, was issued on December 23, 1947, and ordered the relocation of Azerbaijanis living in Armenia to the Kura-Aras Plain of Azerbaijan under the pretext of agricultural development (particularly the cotton-growing industry). The second decision, No. 754 in official documentation, was issued on March 10, 1948, and ensured the implementation of the first decision. This resulted in approximately 150,000 Azerbaijanis being driven out of their homeland, particularly from Zangezur (Syunik in Armenian) region, with some adverse effects on the region's population and culture (Bahramov, 2022). Azerbaijanis had to abandon their homes, lands, and cultural heritage. Many cultural and religious landmarks were abandoned or destroyed, with the underlying aim of eliminating the Azerbaijani footprint from the region's cultural and societal fabric. This policy was part of a deeper strategy that aimed to permanently relocate Armenians to these areas, including those living abroad in the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East (Hamidov, 2018). Soviet authorities pursued a similar policy with the deportations of Chechens and Ingushes, Balkars and Karachays, and other nationalities to Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

Third Stage of Deportation, 1987-1991

The third wave of Azerbaijani expulsions from Armenia happened between 1987 and 1991. Azerbaijanis, once again, experienced brutal deportations that were enforced and supported by the Armenian government and police (Papazian, 2023). Residents were forced to leave behind their homes, pastures, crops, and gardens that their families had developed for generations. The upward trend in the brutality with which Azerbaijanis were treated coincided with a rise of nationalism in Armenia. Slogans such as "Turkless Armenia", "Armenia should be cleansed of Turks!" and "Armenia is only for Armenians!" were being spread and widely utilized (Huseynova, 2022). Moreover, those Azerbaijanis that did gather to protest and offer some kind of resistance were met with equally brutal actions, such as having their properties confiscated and even destroyed.

Armenian nationalists argued that the deportation of Azerbaijanis was a response to violence against Armenians in Azerbaijan, especially in Sumgayit on February 27, 1988. However, the first attacks against Azerbaijanis in Armenia happened before the event in Sumgayit. As early as in the fall of 1987, there was already violence against Azerbaijanis in Armenia. This became more large-scale and widespread by the beginning of February 1988 (de Waal, 2003). In June 1988, the Armenian SSR Su-

preme Soviet requested the USSR Supreme Soviet to approve the annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast and formally declare it as part of Armenia. This request was rejected, leading to an even more complex and brutal situation for local Azerbaijanis who now had to endure more intense aggression against them. The villages of Zangiler, Zahmet, Demirchi, Dostlug, Nizami, and Sarvanlar, as well as the regional headquarters of Masis, were attacked by Armenian gangs on June 17-20. Over the course of one night, tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis relocated to the Soviet-Turkish border. Masis, for example, witnessed the forced removal of almost 3,000 residents. The USSR's Ministry of Internal Affairs had no active part during any of these riots, largely acting as passive observers. Refugees were housed in transitional resettlement centers before being transferred to their new permanent communities. The Azerbaijani side estimates 250,000 Azerbaijanis were deported from Armenia in 1987-1991, with 216 killed and 1,154 wounded (president.az). De Waal (2003) maintains that about 186,000 Azerbaijanis along with 18,000 Kurdish Muslims and 3,500 Russians became refugees from Armenia – total 207,500 people.

This issue has undoubtedly exacerbated tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia. A complete lack of accountability for these actions resulted from the Soviet leadership's reluctance to move away from its policy of placing equal blame on both sides of the conflict, regardless of the specific circumstances of a given tragedy or process. Hence, the central authority made a habit of penalizing individual managers, ministers, or law enforcement agents (Yavuz & Gunter, 2022). This aspect, in addition to the failure of recognizing the evident humanitarian and political ramifications of the issue, meant the issue became applicable to all locations where Armenians and Azerbaijanis coexisted (Kucera, 2023). This problem and the suffering endured by thousands forms an integral part of the modern-day discourse visible in Azerbaijani politics and society. Displaced Azerbaijani's faced profound changes and obstacles to their lives, some of which were never overcome. The issue deserves to be investigated at a high level of accuracy, given that it is a consequence of what is a clear and serious breach of international human rights law.

Interviews

The interviews conducted focused on people that lived in Armenia and suffered from the actions described in this paper. Sameddin Ibrahimov, the first interviewee, was born in 1953 in the village of Haggixli, the Dilican district of Armenian SSR. He is currently a teacher of the Azerbaijani language and literature at the Dayanat Foundation School in Turkey.

Alixvan Mammadov, the second interviewee, was born in 1948 in the village of “Cele” in the Dilijan district of the Armenian SSR. From 1987 to 2017, he served as the director of School Number 27 in the city of Sumgait. He is now retired.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov, born in 1952 in the village of “Ashagi Neycili” in the Zangabasar district of ancient Yerevan, is the third interviewee. After graduating from secondary school in the Shamkir district in 1969, he taught Azerbaijani language and literature in schools located in different parts of Yerevan. After 1980, he was a correspondent for the ‘Soviet Armenia’ newspaper.

Asgar Zeynalov, the last interviewee, was born in 1951 in the village of “Yukhari Necili” in the Zangabasar district of Yerevan. In 1974 he graduated from the “APXDI” French language programme. His doctoral thesis on “Azerbaijani tales in the Caucasus region” in 1991 was one of his main accomplishments. In 2003, he successfully defended his dissertation on “Oriental themes in French literature.” He conducted research at the Yerevan Institute of Manuscripts and obtained more than 550 Azerbaijani tales.

1. *Living conditions prior to deportation.*

Sameddin Ibrahimov provided detailed information on the history of his village, with historical evidence demonstrating that it was once Oghuz Turk territory. He believes that due to the lack of government support, the living conditions in the village were poor. They were essentially based on and reflected the lifestyle of Oghuz Turks’, with homestead farms and collective farms. Ibrahimov noted that “the transportation system in our village did not function, there were no petrol lines, our roads were not very comfortable, and people lived in squalor with tremendous suffering”.

Alixvan Mammadov stated that living conditions prior to the deportation were extremely poor. People were heavily reliant on agricultural and collective farming revenues. Due to village traditions, each family was required to raise at least five children. Given economic hardship, this was often unsustainable, with newborns passing away due to shortages of basic supplies.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov noted that large proportions of the population were involved with agriculture, with people working on communal and homestead farms. Many sold their agricultural products in Yerevan. He also stated that the general economic situation was not one of considerable prosperity, with restrictions on individual and financial liberties.

Asgar Zeynalov also stated that living conditions were not extremely poor and some people did benefit from different opportunities. In Armenia, he was a teacher, and most of his relatives were financially secure. He and his family were able to meet the basic requirements to sustain their families. Summary: Two of the four interviewees (Sameddin Ibrahimov and Alixvan Mamedov) evaluated the overall living situation as miserable. The other two interviewees classified the situation as adequate and sufficient.

2. *The relationship between Azerbaijanis and Armenians.*

Sameddin Ibrahimov stated that the relationship was not amiable. During Soviet rule, Armenian nationalist sentiments were not as passionately pronounced as they were during the third deportation period which began in 1988. Hence, Azerbaijanis did not experience much hostility. He did, however, feel a gradual distancing of the Armenians from the Azerbaijanis. Moreover, the Azerbaijanis were unable to assert themselves in domestic society. Many Azerbaijani university graduates could not work in any profession other than teaching after returning to their home. In fact, the most renowned position held by an Azerbaijani was that of ‘kolkhoz leader’.

Alixvan Mammadov did not observe any aggression or hostility from Armenians prior to the deportation, with the Soviet era and particularly the communist ideals and community preventing the display of evident nationalist sentiments. He also noted that there were no Armenians in their hamlet, and that he rarely saw Armenian officials in their village.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov, however, insisted that the relationship was tense and Armenian resistance to Azerbaijani presence grew stronger with time and had begun in Karabakh. There was a clear absence of compassion towards the other community, something that intensified following the official dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Asgar Zeynalov, on the other hand, stated that the relationship with Armenians was not negative. Instead, it was one of complete neutrality. Both nationalities in his village were supportive of each other and even shared positive memories prior to the tragic events.

Summary: Three of the interviewees expressed similar disapproval of the state of the relationship, underlining its tense and agitated nature. The final interviewee, however, offered a more positive view that was based on individual experiences in his village.

3. *Changes in relationship prior to the beginning of deportation proceedings.*

Sameddin Ibrahimov reflected on a shared feeling that existed amongst the Azerbaijani population that deportations were on the verge of commencing, and crimes were going to intensify. For example, prior to the deportations, electricity was being cut off and transportation was being halted as a way of further complicating communication with friends and family for the Azerbaijanis. Those individuals

fortunate enough to have connections in other Azerbaijani cities were quick to purchase homes near their relatives, with some rapidly sending some family members to cities like Mingachevir, Sumgait, and Kazakh.

Alixvan Mammadov's response supported the claims made by the first interviewee, suggesting that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was used as an opportunity to conduct violent deportation operations against Azerbaijanis. In fact, it was the Sumgayit incident that confirmed to him the desire of the Armenian side to pursue an ultra-aggressive approach.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov stated that the relationship between the sides was at a very superficial level and could not be categorized as anything more than a relationship between geographical neighbors. However, the situation took a decisive turn for the worse after the beginning of the Karabakh conflict in February 1988. He observed a drastic change in the Armenian approach to Azerbaijanis, with aggressive and nationalistic language acting as a major obstacle for the welfare of the population. The interviewee himself recalled an unsuccessful attempt by Armenians to enter his workplace through violence and intimidation.

Asgar Zeynalov confirmed the feeling of Bakhtiyar Bayramov, noting a sudden and violent shift towards a more aggressive stance against Azerbaijanis. On the eve of the conflict, an assault on Azerbaijani villages in Armenia was launched with teachers and other public servants attacked.

Summary: All four interviewees noted a sudden, violent change in the attitude of the Armenian population towards Azerbaijanis prior to the beginning of deportations.

4. *The survival attempts that Azerbaijanians relied on following deportation.*

Sameddin Ibrahimov stated that his attachment to his home territory is eternal and cannot be erased, regardless of the obstacles placed in front of him. He does not consider an alternative reality where the return to his home does not take place.

Alixvan Mammadov's elderly family members did not survive the deportation as they were unable to adapt to the new climate and to life in industrial cities like Baku and Sumgayit. Moreover, the interviewee notes that the process of deportation began suddenly with the arrival of armed individuals that quickly ensured adequate living conditions were a thing of the past.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov highlighted the aggressive and highly provocative nature of the Armenian population. There were regular local disputes with those that relocated to Azerbaijani cities.

Asgar Zeynalov noted that Armenian attacks on Azerbaijani communities and residences began on June 17, 1988. This forced him and his family to relocate. Armenians that arrived back in Yerevan after the Sumgait events contributed to the intensification and acceleration of the deportation process.

Summary: All interviewees reported that they faced difficulties surviving without their homeland.

5. *Challenges encountered after arriving in Azerbaijan.*

Sameddin Ibrahimov noted that most individuals deported were unable to own property in Azerbaijan as their savings had to remain in Armenia. Some of the refugees resided temporarily with their relatives, but received no assistance from the government (financial, psychological, or judicial).

Alixvan Mammadov reported that deported individuals faced extremely challenging economic conditions. They were forced to borrow money and accumulated heavy debt as a result. Moreover, poor property conditions meant they were unable to host guests and meet with relatives.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov stated that upon arrival Azerbaijanis encountered issues such as unemployment, destitution and even homelessness.

Asgar Zeynalov also faced significant challenges, including financial hardship and issues finding permanent accommodation.

Summary: All interviewees dealt with significant hardship, stressing the difficulties caused by forced deportation.

6. *“If you were to return, would you prefer to live in the same location as prior to your deportation or would you accept living in an alternative location?”*

Sameddin Ibrahimov stated that he would like to live in Haggixli village. He highlighted the work done by the Azerbaijani government in establishing the Western Azerbaijani community, which he hopes will allow those affected to meet and discuss their personal situations. He is convinced that Azerbaijanis, just like Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, should be able to live in areas like the Goycha district, Karakoyunlu district, Zangazur, and other historical Azerbaijani locations.

Alixvan Mammadov said that should an opportunity to return arise, he would be keen to first reside in his own region. Nevertheless, if this were to be impossible, he would accept living in another location if adequate accommodation would be constructed.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov was keen to return directly to his homeland.

Asgar Zeynalov was also keen to return to his former home. However, he pointed out that a mass return of Azerbaijanis to these locations should only be acceptable if members of the community all live in proximity to each other and were allowed to establish a tight-knit society.

Summary: All interviewees expressed a desire to return directly to their former place of residence. However, they were open to returning to other parts of Armenia should their safety be guaranteed.

7. *Post-return factors and issues that most concerned the interviewees.*

Sameddin Ibrahimov expressed his concerns about his individual safety. Recent actions by Armenian communities highlight that their aggressive approach remains to this day. This would likely cause societal issues, with the youth unable to integrate adequately. Most Azerbaijanis born in these territories are no longer alive. Therefore, significant work is required to ensure that adequate conditions are in place for the youth to be integrated safely and comprehensively.

Alixvan Mammadov also believes that safety would be his main concern. He would not feel secure, primarily due to the aggressive nature of Armenians that he believes would still cause issues. He is concerned that because of the losses incurred by the Armenian side following the Second Karabakh war, many would let their anger and emotions out on the returning Azerbaijanis. He also has concerns about whether his economic situation (he is a pensioner) would be sufficiently strong to allow him to live a normal life, with accommodation and living costs likely to cause him issues. He is adamant that either the Azerbaijani or Armenian government must provide the individuals with accessible housing and employment opportunities.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov also claimed that the state must ensure the security of Azerbaijanis. More needs to be done by all sides to achieve peaceful co-existence, crucial to avoiding another war.

Asgar Zeynalov believes both governments must ensure the local Armenian population is unable to freely attack and suppress the Azerbaijani population, as was achieved in 1988.

Summary: All four interviewees stressed the importance of ensuring individual security of the population, allowing fair access to infrastructure, and working to provide adequate opportunities to establish societal cohesion with the aim of preventing future conflict between the nations.

8. *The areas or industries they see themselves working in after their return.*

Sameddin Ibrahimov is a teacher and would be keen to continue working in this sphere.

Alixvan Mammadov stated that if he had returned earlier, he would work as a teacher of the Azerbaijani language and literature. However, given that he is now retired, he would focus on farming.

Bakhtiyar Bayramov informed that his health prevents him from working in any industry. However, if he was healthy, he would have returned to the editorial office.

Asgar Zeynalov said that he would like to teach in his home village. If there was an Azerbaijani educational center in Yerevan, he would be eager and open to teaching there as well.

Summary: Sameddin Ibrahimov and Asgar Zeynalov would work in education, whereas Bakhtiyar Bayramov and Alixvan Mammadov are now unable to work due to health issues and retirement.

Overall, it is evident from these interviews that there was widespread hostility towards the Azerbaijani population. This affected educational opportunities, access to health care, the ability to exercise political and legal rights, and crucially, individual safety and societal integration. The Armenian population was consistently unfriendly towards Azerbaijanis. Moreover, following deportation, Azerbaijanis suffered from poor access to housing and basic living supplies. They were also struck by homesickness, something that can still be observed and felt today through engagements with the interviewees. All four individuals expressed a strong desire to return to their respective places of birth. Their statements push one towards the conclusion that should the prospect of returning those deported become a real possibility, significant government assistance must be arranged to guarantee safety and ensure that all the above-mentioned conditions are met to an acceptable and sustainable standard.

This is essential as it highlights both an emotional and cultural attachment of the individuals to their lands, with the preservation of cultural heritage viewed as the clear priority. Given the fragility of the current peace process and the broader relationship, this kind of absence of territorial claims is essential for any meaningful progress. Should there be ample evidence of this being applicable to both sides of the conflict, the likelihood of peace being achieved and issues like the deportation of Azerbaijanis being resolved would increase dramatically.

The Four Potential Policies Regarding the Process of the Return of Refugees

The following four policies should be considered as useful when addressing the issue discussed in this paper. This section discusses and evaluates them in detail.

Reparations for Azerbaijani Refugees

This policy proposes that Azerbaijani refugees are financially compensated for the suffering they had to endure as a direct consequence of the conflict.

The concept of reparations has been extensively utilized in the past to deal with issues like mass migration and human rights abuses. Pérez Murcia (2014) writes about the difficulties of delivering reparations in situations which include widespread population movement and severe and widespread abuses of human rights. The distribution of reparations should be conducted in accordance with well-established principles, guided by the country's social policy whilst considering the level of suffering endured and the degree of personal losses incurred. Reparations can come in the form of monetary compensation, restitution, or payment towards participation in a rehabilitation programme to those that sustained physical or emotional damage following the events. Compensation should take into consideration things like lost property, even though this has been complicated by how much time has already passed, and other economic losses.

The potential challenges associated with identifying those individuals and groups deserving compensation and the respective amounts to be paid to them must not be understated (Pérez Murcia 2014). It is difficult to assess the full extent of the losses suffered by the individuals, especially because of their constant geographical relocation. Distribution of reparations is likely to be a highly sensitive practice, which is why it must be dealt with accurately to avoid the emergence of further issues. For example, those that receive less compensation might protest this decision and question the validity of the whole programme.

Implementation of Social Programs for Refugees

Creating social programs to facilitate the reintegration of refugees into society is crucial, helping improve their chances of successfully settling down and immersing themselves into all aspects of society.

Brazil is a good example of a country that was able to successfully integrate refugees via the provision of social services. This includes assisting with learning the local language, providing specific employability training courses and cultural integration initiatives (Moreira and Beaninger 2010). Brazil is widely considered a safe location for the displaced, with its cultural laws enhancing reintegration.

tion. These services are available in conjunction with help that focuses on securing accommodation, employment, and medical care. Many refugees have become integral members of the Brazilian community, contributing to the country's GDP and productivity.

Germany's response to the influx of Syrian refugees is another example of a country providing effective social support. The country hosted around 600,000 Syrian refugees between 2014 and 2016, which according to statistics is the largest inflow of refugees in a developed country since World War Two. Only an estimated 2% of the reported figure failed to obtain official 'refugee status' (Hannafi and Ali Marouani 2022). According to research conducted on the state of mental health of Syrian refugees following their arrival in Germany, social support programs are essential to successful societal integration (Renner et al.'s 2020). The German government has established numerous initiatives to ease what is a highly complex and emotionally demanding transition. These have helped Syrian refugees adjust to life in German society. A leading example of this is the relationship between the level of speaking proficiency in German and English and the intention to stay in the country in the long-term. Research conducted proves that those refugees that benefitted from social programs focusing on language skills were more likely to stay in Germany for several years (Hannafi and Ali Marouani 2022). Another useful example is the cash-for-work initiative, funded by various donors, used to strengthen community bonds in Jordanian towns that experienced a surge in the arrival of Syrian refugees (Zintl&Loewe, 2022). Through this method, refugees can contribute to their new communities whilst maintaining their families with the help of the financial support provided. This initiative allows refugees to establish new relationships with their neighbors and position themselves at the heart of their respective communities. This leads to strengthened social harmony and reduces potential hostility between refugees and the local population.

However, the above-mentioned examples cannot be fully applied to the case of Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia. The history of inter-state conflict and animosity, for example, has not affected Middle Eastern refugees (i.e. Germany and Syria had no interstate conflict).

Such initiatives must act as a source of inspiration for those in charge of assisting those Azerbaijanis seeking to return to the lands they were once expelled from in Armenia. However, they must be developed in a comprehensive way that ensure the policies are flexible and able to be helpful to different people with different individual stories and circumstances. The support must be all-encompassing and touch upon all aspects of daily life. There are certainly sufficient examples, discussed above, that should give an idea of what might work in this specific case.

Legal and Administrative Measures

Protecting the rights of refugees and facilitating their return home requires the adoption of relevant legislative and administrative measures. One option is to follow successful models pursued by other

countries. Turkey, for example, has taken numerous steps to incorporate Syrian refugees into its society (İçduygu and Şimşek 2016). This includes legal and administrative support, and professional counselling in spheres like education, healthcare, and employment. The authors suggest that similar strategies may be adopted in Azerbaijan.

Legal measures include the right to asylum and protection from refoulment (Weis 1954). This would guarantee the prevention of illegal removal and the denial of access to basic rights. From an administrative perspective, a country could design a framework that assists with the establishment of a fair and transparent refugee status determination process. This kind of system currently operates in the United States, Canada, and Australia, enabling impartial evaluation of individual cases and circumstances (Hamlin 2012).

It is equally important to establish a mechanism that facilitates coordination between foreign bodies and domestic authorities. This is likely to enhance the application of the rule of law and government policy. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) could work with Armenian authorities to design and implement laws that protect and secure the rights of refugees. Refugees can also rely on UNHCR for help with things like shelter, food, and other essentials.

Overall, the adoption of legal and administrative measures is essential for the complete resolution of the issue. Leading authors such as Weis, İçduygu and Şimşek, and Hamlin all highlight the importance that legal and administrative measures possess in preserving the rights of refugees and facilitating the coordination of their permanent re-integration into society. Moreover, international organizations like UNHCR are crucial for the legitimization of the process and for guaranteeing a certain degree of impartiality. Moreover, given the status of international organizations as forums for international cooperation, their involvement in the process is likely to increase the probability of an equal and fair application of international law. In this case, this is the unequivocal support to displaced Azerbaijanis wishing to return to the lands they were once unfairly expelled from.

Promoting Inter-ethnic Dialogue and Reconciliation

Several studies have examined the impact of peace-building techniques on directly improving relations between ethnic groups that have been at conflict for a prolonged period. For example, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), based in Kenya, is an example of an organization that has engaged in this type of work (Mwamba et al. 2019). It has relied on measures such as arranging peace conferences and community gatherings to spread reassuring messages of harmony. Since these measures have been put in place, there has been a reported drop in violence between Kenya's various ethnic groups. Effective communication and the development of mutual understanding has proven essential in building deep-rooted trust between communities and social groups.

Another effective peace-making program is the South African based Truth and Reconciliation Com-

mission (TRC) (Allan & Allan, 2000). Human rights breaches committed during the apartheid era were investigated by the TRC, founded in 1995 to facilitate reunification at the societal level. The TRC's strategy was to create a safe space where representatives of both sides were able to converse, express their feelings and opinions and even ask for forgiveness. The work of the organization was essential in fostering healing and reconciliation in South Africa, and it has been promoted as an example for others to follow. It focused on victim-centered techniques with an emphasis on truth-telling and promoting accountability among affected ethnic groups. In any case, truth must be confronted and for peace to be sustainable, responsibility must be accepted. This is directly applicable to the Azerbaijani-Armenian situation, reflected by the concerns of interviewees regarding their acceptance into the dynamics of the local community. By encouraging dialogue between different ethnic groups, one facilitates the development of mutual trust, essential for peaceful co-existence. This cannot be achieved without a collective and profound appreciation, understanding and resolution of the root causes of the conflict in question. Not only should this facilitate healing and rehabilitation, but also help develop trust to an extent that minimizes the risk of violence from ever occurring again. This is only possible through an approach that encourages consistent learning, dialogue, and reflection.

The effectiveness of these approaches can of course be tested in the situation between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. Given the highly violent nature of the history of the conflict, it requires a serious approach that, above everything else, focuses on the elimination of violence and hatred, with the latter often being a leading source of aggression. Promoting inter-ethnic conversation and reconciliation is a lengthy and fragile process, likely to encounter serious obstacles that may jeopardize the entire concept. Therefore, if it is not possible to achieve this in its entirety, achieving justice and ensuring accountability must be prioritized.

If, however, progress is considerable and there is a desire from both sides to enhance the reconciliation process, input from members of the relevant communities would be essential. This emphasizes the critical role played by governmental forums in facilitating the coordination and arrangement of this. The role of youth organizations is of equal importance, especially given the importance of future generations in the long-term unfolding of the process. Collaboration must begin at the youth level, with educational institutions also playing an important role in raising awareness about the issue and the current measures in place designed to address it. In other words, 'peace education' should be promoted across all levels of government and implemented across all levels of society.

Policy Evaluation

This section will consider potential issues and challenges that may arise in the implementation of the proposed alternatives.

1. Reparations for Azerbaijani Refugees Deported from Armenia.

There could be issues with distinguishing who exactly is eligible for the proposed concepts of monetary compensation, restitution and rehabilitation. This must be dealt with carefully, ensuring a fair and transparent process.

2. Implementation of Social Programs.

There is a risk that these programs could not be comprehensive enough in solving the root cause of the problem. Even though there may be success with assisting specific areas of life such as finances or healthcare, a social program must be flexible enough to assist different individuals in unique ways. Moreover, given the highly violent nature of the displacement, the support provided in some cases might simply be insufficient given the psychological burden that may be acting as an overarching and more dominant factor. Therefore, social programs should be treated with caution and deployed following thorough assessments of individual circumstances.

Here, we also face a political issue as the Armenian government and society completely denies the possibility of the return of Azerbaijanis.

3. Legal and Administrative Measures.

Given the highly sensitive nature of the issue at hand, there may be significant delays in approving legal and administrative measures. This may be because of the novelty of some approaches but also because of the time required to work through the measures at all levels of government and then present the idea to the affected community. Moreover, the enforcement would need to be regulated, requiring additional delegations of responsibility. Again, should the approach in question be a newly elaborated concept, significant time could be needed before a truly positive impact on society can be observed. Moreover, it is obvious that the international guarantees or even maybe presence is needed to ensure the safety of Azerbaijanis.

4. Promoting Inter-ethnic Dialogue and Reconciliation

It would be reasonable to view this policy as a ‘later-stage’ pillar of the broader reconciliation program. For inter-ethnic dialogue to be possible, and, crucially, for it to be constructive, several prior

steps must be taken. This includes the elimination of the risk of violence, something that cannot be currently guaranteed given the occasional hostilities between the two parties of the former conflict. An educational program must help the development of mutual trust. Essentially, there must be ample evidence that the sides are ‘on the same page’ with regards to the history of the conflict and are not fundamentally different in how to proceed in the future. There will undoubtedly be differences, but certain thresholds and criteria must be met before a serious and genuine effort to initiate direct dialogue can commence. Finally, the basic right of refugees to return to their homes without fearing for their safety must be universally acknowledged and protected, with this occurring in accordance with relevant mechanisms of international humanitarian law.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, given the scale of hardship endured by the Azerbaijani community and the difficulties associated with achieving lasting progress through diplomatic channels, a durable and genuine solution to the issue can only be achieved through a strong collective will. The three separate waves of deportations highlight the extent of the aggressive approach from the Armenian side. This underlines the importance of any solution to the issue originating from within Armenian political leadership and society, acknowledging the suffering inflicted on numerous generations across hundreds of years. This involves both the physical aspect of the deportation but also the moral impact on the future of the individuals concerned. Without this, the situation will struggle to exit from what is an endless and repetitive cycle of hostilities and unsuccessful attempts to reconcile.

Crucially, however, there should be adequate political will shared by both governments. Even though progress at the individual level is essential, actors with decision-making capacity must ensure the interests of those affected are represented in the fairest way. The participation of influential members of the international community is highly desirable. As described, there are examples of positive experiences with issues of a similar complexity and magnitude from which a lot can be deduced and even directly applied.

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