



HASMUN

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I. LETTER FROM SECRETARY GENERAL

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to HASMUN 2025 — a journey that goes far beyond a typical Model United Nations conference.

This year, we invite you to become part of an experience built on diplomacy, dialogue, and the determination to create change. HASMUN has long stood as a platform for driven individuals to challenge perspectives, develop leadership, and speak for the world they envision. In every committee room, in every debate, we believe your voice has the power to shape not only resolutions, but real ideas for the future.

Whether this is your first MUN or one of many, we encourage you to approach each session with openness, curiosity, and commitment. The friendships you form, the ideas you exchange, and the challenges you overcome will stay with you long after the final gavel falls.

On behalf of the entire Secretariat, we are thrilled to have you with us. Prepare to question, to collaborate, and to grow.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

**Warm regards,
Nazrin Sadigova
Secretary-General
HASMUN 2025**

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II. LETTER FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Most Esteemed Participants,

Firstly, it is our utmost pleasure to give you a warm welcome to the Historical United Nations General Assembly Special Session in 1990. We are Mehmet Polat from Bahçeşehir University with a bachelor degree of Economics; and Reysi Kurtaran from Bahçeşehir University with double bachelor degrees of Sociology and Psychology, and we are pleased to serve you as the Board Members in this committee.

Our agenda item, The Question of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Protection of Ethnic Rights in the Soviet Union, is highlighting a very important historical event that gained consideration on a global level whilst pointing out crucial humanitarian questions that have crucial sociological consequences. Our

expectations from you in this committee are to read the guide very well, adapt to the history and be a part of that time while taking the events to consideration.

Lastly, we want to express our special thanks to our Academic Assistant, Şeyda Arslan and Yiğit Hocek for their excellent and countless contributions, and we send our infinite gratitudes to our honorable Secretary General, Nazrin Sadigova and her Deputy Secretaries General, Ayşe Gülsüm and Samet Aba for their hard work and offering this chance to us.

Our most initial hope is that you will have a fun, teaching and unforgettable three days in this amazing conference! If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us before, during and after the conference.

reysikurtaran@hotmail.com

Sincerely,

Reysi Kurtaran and Mehmet Polat

III. INTRODUCTION TO UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) serves as the primary decision making body of the UN. It includes all 193 Member States, each with one equal vote, and offers a unique platform for multilateral dialogue on a wide range of global issues outlined in the UN Charter.

The General Assembly plays a crucial role in the functioning of the UN by:

- Appointing the Secretary General based on the Security Council's recommendation
- Electing nonpermanent members to the Security Council
- Approving the organization's budget

The United Nations General Assembly had its first session on January 10, 1946, in London's Methodist Central Hall, with representatives from 51 countries present. Prior to moving to its permanent headquarters in Manhattan in 1951, the Assembly met at the initial New York City Pavilion of the 1939 New York World's Fair in Flushing, New York. The Assembly holds its regular sessions from September to December each year and can reconvene as needed. During these sessions, it addresses a variety of global matters through specific agenda items, which may result in the adoption of formal resolutions. A two thirds majority is required for decisions on essential topics such as peace and security, new member admissions, and monetary matters. Additional matters are decided by a simple majority.

Though the General Assembly's resolutions have no imposing power on member nations (aside from budgetary measures), under its Uniting for Peace resolution of November 1950 (resolution 377 (V)), the Assembly can step in if the Security Council fails to act due to a negative vote by a permanent member in a case where there seems to be a threat to peace, breach of peace, or act of violence. The Assembly can address the subject right away and make proposals to Members on collective steps to preserve or recover global security and peace (Wikipedia, n.d.).

IV. INTRODUCTION TO AGENDA ITEM

The Question of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Protection of Ethnic Rights in the Soviet Union

Armenia and Azerbaijan, immediate parties to the conflict, establish their justification and claims to Nagorno-Karabakh mainly on mutually exclusive historiographies in which groups were respectively exposed as early settlers and true owners of the region. When the Baku oil boom was at its height in the early twentieth century the reliance of Russian authorities more on Armenians in distribution of higher managerial positions set the roots of early animosities between affluent and urbanized Christian Armenians and peasant Muslim Azerbaijanis. The first intercommunal clashes erupted in Baku as early as 1905 and eventually spread to Karabakh, Nakhchevan and Yerevan, where ethnic groups lived in compact and identified one another with their ethnicity. Until the bloody events of 1915 with all its causes and consequences that started a new wave of Armenian migration into Nagorno-Karabakh and Yerevan relations between the communities remained somewhat calm when the Russian Empire established its firm control over the region. Amid the rising chaos out of the Bolshevik

revolution and turmoil of the world war Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence in 1918. With the material support of the Armenian Republic and radical Dashnaksutiun organization, Armenians conducted continuous guerilla warfare and rebellions against Azerbaijan awaiting the actual collapse of the republic after the invasion of the Red Army. Subsequent to Soviet incorporation of Republics in South Caucasus the struggle over Nagorno-Karabakh shifted from a military confrontation to political debate in their first meeting the revolutionary committee placed Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhchevan under Armenian administration and pressured Soviet as a Bajan to confirm the decision by a statement, however the transfer decision was denied by Azerbaijani authorities. A year later, the decision was completely reversed by the central authorities and put both territories under the jurisdiction of Soviet Azerbaijan. The “Treaty of brotherhood and friendship” signed between the two finalized de jure control of Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Subsequently in 1923, the region received autonomy status and thereafter called Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO). Given that Karabakh was promised to Armenians by Bolsheviks before the invasion of the red army, the inclusion of it in Azerbaijan Soviet socialist Republic (ASSR) caused massive disappointment on the part of Armenians. As Armenian discontent remained high, several political attempts were undertaken to achieve the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenian jurisdiction. Due to various reasons tensions were alleviated till the 1960s, when new waves of protest in regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh question were staged by Armenians. Despite all calls from Armenians, the successors of Stalin throughout Soviet history, refused to revisit the Nagorno-Karabakh question.

V. KEY VOCABULARY

Nagorno-Karabakh: A landlocked region located in Azerbaijan that covers the southeastern portion of the Lesser Caucasus mountain range., governed by ethnic Armenians.

Ceasefire: A temporary or a permanent halt in fighting, usually negotiating and agreeing upon conflicting parties.

Autonomous Oblast: An autonomous entity within a state that is at the provincial level of the broader administrative division.

Perestroika: The political reform movement from the 1980s, highly associated with Communist Party of the Soviet Union and their leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Pogroms: Organized massacres or severe attacks to specific ethnic groups, especially minority groups that live in that territory.

Autonomy: Ability of a region to govern itself within a larger political framework.

Interethnic Conflict: Any type of violence, aggression or the tension between different ethnic groups, often triggered by political, historical events or territorial disputes.

Union Treaty: A proposed attempt to make the Soviet Union more decentralized with increased autonomy between territories, which later failed.

Militias: Armed groups that are not aligned with the state but with the ethnic background.

Secession: A group's formal withdrawal from a political entity.

VI. FOCUSED OVERVIEW

A. Background of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict:

Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous region located within the borders of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), but it has historically been home to a majority ethnic Armenian population. The roots of the conflict go back to the early 20th century, when both newly independent Armenia and Azerbaijan claimed the region after the collapse of the Russian Empire. Between 1918 and 1920, armed clashes and local violence occurred as both sides tried to take control.

In the early 1920s, after the Soviet Union took over the South Caucasus, it decided to create the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) within Azerbaijan SSR in 1923. Although the majority of the population in the region

was Armenian, it remained under Azerbaijani jurisdiction. This decision was made by Soviet authorities, who aimed to keep a balance between different ethnic groups and maintain control over the region. However, this decision caused disagreements and dissatisfaction, especially among Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, who wanted closer ties with Armenia.

During the Soviet period, the region remained relatively calm on the surface, but problems continued in the background. People living in Nagorno-Karabakh sometimes complained about economic inequality, cultural restrictions, and lack of representation. On the other hand, Azerbaijani officials stressed the importance of respecting Soviet borders and the unity of the Azerbaijan SSR.

The situation changed in the late 1980s, when the Soviet Union introduced reforms like glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). These reforms allowed local people to express their political and national demands more openly. In 1988, the local parliament in Nagorno-Karabakh voted to join the Armenian SSR. This decision created strong reactions in Azerbaijan and led to large scale protests, followed by violent incidents.

Shortly after, ethnic tensions turned into violence. In February 1988, serious attacks against Armenians took place in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait, resulting in deaths and injuries. In the following months, similar violence and revenge attacks happened in other areas. Both Armenians and Azerbaijanis were forced to leave their homes due to fear, attacks, and rising hostility.

By 1990, the conflict had grown into a serious crisis. There were regular clashes between communities, loss of life, and military involvement. The central Soviet government tried to control the situation by sending troops to some cities, but these efforts were not enough to stop the spread of violence. Trust between the communities collapsed, and peaceful dialogue became harder. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had become one of the most dangerous and sensitive issues in the Soviet Union, with no clear solution in sight.

B. Nagorno-Karabakh Relations During Soviet Union Era:

During the Soviet Union era, the Nagorno-Karabakh region was officially part of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), but it was granted autonomous status as the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) in 1923. This arrangement was part of the Soviet nationality policy, which aimed to manage ethnic diversity by giving limited cultural autonomy to ethnic minorities while keeping strict central control. Although the majority of the population in Nagorno-Karabakh was Armenian, the region remained under Azerbaijani administration, and this became a long standing point of tension.

Relations between the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and the central Azerbaijani government were shaped by issues of governance, representation, and cultural rights. Many Armenians in the oblast believed that their political voice was limited and that the region did not receive equal economic investment compared to other areas. They also expressed concern over cultural restrictions, including the status of the Armenian language and education. At the same time, Azerbaijani officials defended the existing administrative structure and emphasized the importance of maintaining the Soviet republics' territorial boundaries.

Throughout the Soviet period, there were several attempts by local Armenian leaders and institutions to request the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to the Armenian SSR. These appeals were sent directly to Soviet leaders in Moscow, especially during periods of political change. However, all such requests were rejected by the central government, which feared that altering borders could encourage further ethnic disputes across the USSR.

Despite the tensions, open conflict was avoided for most of the Soviet era, largely due to the USSR's strict political control and suppression of nationalist movements. However, mutual distrust and dissatisfaction persisted quietly for decades. The Armenian population of

Nagorno-Karabakh felt more culturally and historically connected to Armenia, while Azerbaijani leadership remained firm in defending the republic's territorial integrity.

This fragile balance started to break down in the mid-1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms—especially glasnost and perestroika—allowed greater freedom of expression. These reforms unintentionally gave space for long-held ethnic and political demands to be voiced more openly. In this environment, the long-standing tension between Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azerbaijani SSR began to escalate rapidly, eventually leading to violent confrontations in 1988 and beyond.

By 1990, relations between the communities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh had severely deteriorated. Decades of unresolved concerns, combined with weak central authority in the late Soviet period, transformed the issue from a local disagreement into a broader regional conflict with serious humanitarian consequences.

C. Major Events that Occurred During the Conflict:

1. Nagorno-Karabakh's Request for Unification (February 1988)

In February 1988, the local parliament in Nagorno-Karabakh officially requested to transfer the region from the Azerbaijan SSR to the Armenian SSR. This unprecedented step created immediate tensions, prompting large-scale demonstrations in Yerevan supporting the decision, and counter-protests in Baku strongly opposing it. Although the central Soviet government in Moscow firmly rejected this request, it ignited intense nationalist sentiments in both republics and set the stage for future confrontations.

2. Sumgait Events (February 1988)

Only days after Nagorno-Karabakh's resolution, severe violence broke out in Sumgait, an industrial city near Azerbaijan's capital, Baku. Azerbaijani mobs targeted Armenian residents, leading to several days of riots in which at least 26 people died and hundreds were injured according to official Soviet reports. Thousands of Armenians subsequently fled the city. Soviet forces intervened after several days to restore order, but the violence deepened interethnic distrust significantly.

3. Escalation of Violence in Other Cities (1988-1989)

Following the Sumgait events, violence spread rapidly. In November 1988, similar ethnic clashes occurred in Kirovabad (today's Ganja), resulting in further casualties and displacement. Smaller-scale conflicts and tensions erupted intermittently in other cities, including Baku and Stepanakert (the administrative center of Nagorno-Karabakh), as both communities accused each other of initiating hostilities. Local authorities were often overwhelmed, and Soviet security forces struggled to maintain peace effectively.

4. Increasing Population Displacement and Refugee Crisis (1988-1990)

As violence intensified, thousands of Armenians and Azerbaijanis began leaving their homes due to fear and insecurity. Armenians living in Azerbaijan's major cities, such as Baku, Sumgait, and Kirovabad, sought refuge in Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh. Simultaneously, Azerbaijanis residing in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh moved to safer areas within Azerbaijan. By 1990, an estimated tens of thousands from both ethnic groups had become internally displaced or refugees, generating significant humanitarian challenges across the region.

5. Soviet Attempts to Restore Stability and the Role of Moscow (1989-1990)

Throughout this period, the central Soviet government under General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev attempted to mediate the conflict and stabilize the situation. Soviet officials frequently visited the region to negotiate ceasefires, and military units were periodically deployed to prevent further violence. However, these interventions were often criticized by both sides as ineffective or biased, leading to diminished trust in Moscow's authority.

6. Black January in Baku (January 1990)

In January 1990, a major turning point occurred when Soviet troops entered Baku to end large scale demonstrations and communal violence. The operation, known as "Black January," resulted in approximately 130 civilian deaths, predominantly Azerbaijanis, and numerous injuries. This intervention had severe consequences: it significantly damaged relations between Azerbaijan and the Soviet central government, intensified anti Soviet sentiments, and further polarized the conflict.

7. Formation of Armed Groups and Increased Militarization (1989-1990)

During 1989 and 1990, the conflict shifted increasingly from street level violence to armed confrontations. Both Armenians and Azerbaijanis started forming informal militia groups for self defense and offensive purposes. These groups often clashed in border areas and around Nagorno-Karabakh, causing further casualties and deepening hostilities. This period marked the beginning of a gradual transition from civil unrest to a militarized conflict, significantly complicating any efforts toward peaceful resolution.

By late 1990, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh had become an entrenched crisis marked by widespread ethnic tensions, frequent violent confrontations, and significant population displacement. The situation was growing increasingly complex, with Soviet authorities losing control over the region and local communities increasingly taking matters into their own hands, setting the stage for further escalation in subsequent years.

C. The Legal Status of Nagorno-Karabakh (1990):

Before 1990, Nagorno-Karabakh was a region with mostly Armenian people, but it was officially part of Azerbaijan when both were in the Soviet Union. In 1923, the Soviet government gave the region the status of an “autonomous oblast,” which meant it had some control over local matters, like culture and language, but it was still under the laws and government of Azerbaijan.

Even though the people there were mostly Armenian, they weren’t legally allowed to break away from Azerbaijan or join Armenia on their own. Any changes like that had to be approved by the top leaders in the Soviet Union, and they never gave that permission. In the late 1980s, when the Soviet Union started opening up more under leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh started asking to join Armenia. In 1988, the local leaders voted to leave Azerbaijan and join Armenia, but both the Soviet government and Azerbaijan said that was illegal. Even when Armenia supported Nagorno-Karabakh’s decision, it didn’t change anything legally because the Soviet rules still said the region belonged to Azerbaijan. The Soviet government believed in keeping the borders of its republics the same, so they didn’t allow Nagorno-Karabakh to change its status.

So, until 1990, the conflict was still under Soviet control, and legally, Nagorno-Karabakh was a part of Azerbaijan, even though many people living there didn’t want it to be.

VII. EMPATHIZING BOTH SIDES

A. AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan sees the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a major issue because it believes that Armenia has taken over land that rightfully belongs to Azerbaijan. This area, Nagorno-Karabakh, is especially important to Azerbaijanis because it's considered the birthplace of many of their composers, writers, and intellectuals. In the early 1990s, after the Soviet Union broke up, Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over this region. During this time, Armenia took control of Nagorno-Karabakh and some surrounding areas, which made up about 20% of Azerbaijan's land. This led to around 600,000 Azerbaijanis being forced to leave their homes and become refugees. Azerbaijan believes that Armenia's actions are against international law and that it has the right to defend itself and take back its land. The Azerbaijani government has been trying to solve this problem peacefully but also feels it can use military action if needed. Over the years, Azerbaijan has strengthened its army and economy to be ready for such situations.

Overall, Azerbaijan's view is that Nagorno-Karabakh is an essential part of its country, and it is determined to regain control over the area, seeing this as crucial for its national pride and sovereignty. Tokluoğlu (2013)

B. ARMENIA

Armenia views the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a matter of self determination for the Armenian people living in that region. They believe that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh should have the right to decide their own future, especially since the area has a majority Armenian population. This perspective is rooted in the idea that every group of people should be able to choose how they are governed and by whom. However, this stance has led to tensions with Azerbaijan, which considers Nagorno-Karabakh as part of its territory. The disagreement over this issue has been a significant factor in the conflicts between the two countries. Doğru (2015)

VIII. UN AND MAJOR POWERS THAT ARE INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT

United Nations

In 1990, the United Nations served a limited involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh war due to the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, particularly one as politically and geographically central as the Soviet Union. At that time, Armenia and Azerbaijan existed as Soviet Socialist Republics, hence the UN didn't acknowledge them as independent actors in the global framework. Nonetheless, as ethnic tensions erupted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, that led to interethnic violence, pogroms (such as those in Sumgait in 1988 and Baku in 1990), and large forced migration, the situation came under increased international observation. Human rights violations targeting ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan, as well as subsequent violence against Azerbaijanis in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, were the focus of informal UN deliberations. This occurred mostly inside sub-organs such as the UN Commission on Human Rights and through NGO consultative groups with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), many of which began presenting reports outlining humanitarian challenges.

Soviet Union

As the primary authority over both Armenia and Azerbaijan, the USSR had the greatest power in the ensuing dispute. The Soviet administration of Mikhail Gorbachev struggled to sustain control over increasing nationalist movements simultaneously striving to change the system through Perestroika and Glasnost. The Nagorno-Karabakh war developed as one of the most dangerous instances of conflict between ethnic groups in the Union.

Initially, the Kremlin tried to calm down Armenian led protests and called for union with Armenia. Later, Moscow formed a "special administration" in Nagorno-Karabakh to seize power from the Azerbaijani SSR, but this merely increased the tensions in the dispute. The Soviet military went overseas several times, but its unpredictable and frequently brutal operations damaged trust. The fall of Soviet authority in the Caucasus was both an indication and an outcome of the escalating violence.

Armenia & Azerbaijan

By 1990, the Armenian SSR and Azerbaijani SSR were established as the dominant protagonists in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, despite being formally part of the USSR. With Moscow's control loosened owing to the USSR's internal crises, both nations gradually took

everything into their own hands, both politically and militarily, which created rising nationalist sentiments and open antagonism between the two.

Armenia

The Armenian SSR became a vocal advocate of the ethnic Armenian majority in Nagorno-Karabakh, encouraging their right to self determination and union with Armenia. The movement began in February 1988, when the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) regional Soviet issued a resolution asking for transfer from Azerbaijani to Armenian governance. This call received considerable backing by large demonstrations in Armenia as well as the Karabakh Committee, a significant nationalist organization that would later serve as the cornerstone for Armenia's first post Soviet leadership.

By 1990, Armenia had given logistical, financial, and psychological assistance to Armenian communities in Nagorno-Karabakh, while also permitting (if not directly assisting) the establishment of local armed militias. Despite Soviet authorities' efforts to suppress such mobilizations, the breakdown of centralized oversight led paramilitary activity to grow. Civil society, particularly students, intellectuals, and the Armenian Church, also actively participated in organizing support for the Karabakh cause, resulting in a deeply nationalistic framing of the conflict.

Azerbaijan

For Azerbaijan, the Nagorno-Karabakh problem was about territorial integrity and national pride. The Azerbaijani government and public view interpreted the Armenian movement as a separatist danger and a violation of the Azerbaijani SSR's sovereignty. Baku rejected requests for the region's separation, claiming that the NKAO had been legitimately created in Azerbaijan since the 1920s and that Armenian allegations were invalid and destabilizing.

Tensions heightened after the Sumgait Pogrom in 1988, in which ethnic Armenians in the Azerbaijani town of Sumgait were brutally attacked by mobs. The event represented a watershed moment in interethnic relations, causing widespread fear and displacement. Many thousands of ethnic Armenians evacuated Azerbaijan, and ethnic Azerbaijanis began abandoning Armenia in reprisal. These population migrations fueled nationalist discourse and exacerbated the disparity.

By mid 1990, the Azerbaijani Popular Front, an expanding nationalist movement, had begun to apply major political force on the government to preserve Nagorno-Karabakh, which contributed to Azerbaijani society's militarization. Similar to Armenia, Azerbaijan started

arming volunteer militias and supporting regional resistance against alleged Armenian advances.

Türkiye

Türkiye, a NATO member and ethnically associated with Azerbaijan, has closely monitored the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. While not actively engaged militarily in 1990, Ankara displayed significant diplomatic support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and advised against what was perceived as Armenian aggression.

Türkiye's viewpoint was additionally influenced by its contentious relationship with Armenia, which was based on the legacy of the Armenian Genocide—a issue that Ankara had yet to address at the time. Turkey fears that the conflict will exacerbate regional instability and rekindle nationalist or separatist aspirations within its borders.

Western Powers (United Kingdom, United States and France)

While not directly involved in the war in 1990, Western countries began to pay closer attention to ethnic disputes and human rights breaches in the falling Soviet Union. The United States, the United Kingdom, and other Western nations demonstrated fear over the emergence of ethnic violence and the Soviet government's failure to safeguard minority groups.

The tremendous Armenian diaspora, especially in France and the United States, strongly advocated for worldwide acknowledgment of the Armenian cause in Nagorno-Karabakh. These countries began monitoring the situation in response to broader concerns about post Cold War instability and the fate of minority groups in the former Eastern Bloc.

IX. QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- What was the legal state between Nagorno-Karabakh before 1990?
- What role did border nations play in the area of dispute?
- How did the policies of Glasnost and Perestroika impact the conflict?
- How can local governance structures be empowered to represent multi-ethnic populations fairly?

- What legal protections should be guaranteed to ethnic minorities within the Soviet Union to prevent inter-ethnic violence?
- How can the rights and safety of civilians especially ethnic minorities and displaced persons be protected during ongoing unrest?
- What concrete actions or recommendations can the UN General Assembly make without violating the sovereignty of the USSR?
- How can the UN promote a peaceful resolution while respecting both self determination and territorial integrity?
- What measures should be taken to ensure the right of return and security for displaced persons?

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