
AZERBAIJAN PREPARING GENOCIDE BILL

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A bill on genocide is being prepared in Azerbaijan in connection with the 25th anniversary of the Khojaly tragedy, said Bahar Muradova, deputy speaker of the Azerbaijani parliament. She made the remarks addressing the presentation of the project titled Study of legal aspects of recognition of crimes of genocide and ethnic cleansing at international level.

The bill preparation began Nov. 20, according to Muradova.

"Public opinion will also be taken into account in the preparation of the bill," she added.

The conflict between the two South Caucasus countries began in 1988 when Armenia made territorial claims against Azerbaijan. As a result of the ensuing war, in 1992 Armenian armed forces occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven surrounding districts.

On February 25-26, 1992, the Armenian armed forces, together with the 366th infantry regiment of Soviet troops, stationed in Khankendi, committed an act of genocide against the population of the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly. As many as 613 people, including 63 children, 106 women and 70 old people were killed as a result of the massacre. Eight families were totally exterminated, 130 children lost one parent and 25 children lost both. A total of 487 civilians became disabled as a result of the onslaught. Some 1,275 innocent residents were taken hostage, while the fate of 150 people still remains unknown.

The 1994 ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan was followed by peace negotiations. Armenia has not yet implemented four UN Security Council resolutions on withdrawal of its armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts.

Kaynak/Source: