

NAGORNO – KARABAKH CONFLICT: INTERNATIONAL RELATION

NEWS: Armenia & Azerbaijan agreement on peace deal

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a territorial and ethnic dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with both countries claiming the region, which has led to multiple wars and ceasefires. A peace agreement signed in 2025 recognizes Azerbaijan's control over the region, ending decades of conflict.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Overview:

- **Territorial and Ethnic Dispute:**

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a long-standing territorial and ethnic dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, a landlocked, mountainous area located in the South Caucasus.

 1. **Ethnic Composition:** Nagorno-Karabakh has a predominantly ethnic Armenian population, although it is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. The ethnic Armenians in the region have sought self-rule and, at times, unification with Armenia, which has been a significant point of contention.
 2. **International Recognition:** While Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan's territory, the region declared independence in 1991, leading to a series of wars and conflicts. Armenia has supported the separatist cause, although the region's legal status remains unresolved in international law.
- **Impact of the Conflict:**

The conflict has resulted in multiple wars, ceasefires, and international interventions, leading to immense human suffering. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, and the region has seen significant loss of life, including during periods of active warfare and subsequent skirmishes along the borders.

Historical Background:

- **Soviet Era (1920s-1988):**
 1. **1921:** Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's decision to place Nagorno-Karabakh under Azerbaijani control, despite its Armenian majority, was part of the Soviet Union's broader "divide-and-rule" strategy. Stalin's policy aimed at preventing ethnic unity in the region, setting the stage for future ethnic tensions.
 2. **Soviet Rule:** Under Soviet control, ethnic tensions remained dormant to some extent due to strict governance. However, the issue was never truly resolved, and grievances continued to simmer beneath the surface, particularly as the USSR weakened.

First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988-1994):

- **1988:** As the Soviet Union began to weaken, ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh demanded unification with Armenia. This demand sparked large-scale unrest, culminating in violent clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.
- **1991:** Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, full-scale war erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Both sides suffered heavy losses, with the war resulting in extensive civilian casualties.
- **1994:** The war ended with a ceasefire brokered by Russia, known as the **Bishkek Protocol**. Under this agreement, Armenia gained control of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding Azerbaijani districts. The ceasefire held but did not resolve the core issue of sovereignty over the region.
- **Outcome:**
 1. Over **30,000 people** died, and nearly **1 million people** were displaced, the majority of whom were Azerbaijanis forced to flee their homes.
 2. Despite the ceasefire, no comprehensive peace agreement was reached, leaving the underlying issue of Nagorno-Karabakh's status unresolved.

Period of Ceasefire (1994-2020):

- **Frequent Border Skirmishes:**

After the 1994 ceasefire, while large-scale fighting ceased, frequent border skirmishes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces continued. These skirmishes were a constant reminder of the fragile peace and deep-rooted animosity between the two sides.
- **Diplomatic Efforts by OSCE Minsk Group:**

The **OSCE Minsk Group**, consisting of Russia, the U.S., and France, was tasked with mediating a peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Despite years of efforts, the Minsk Group's attempts at finding a lasting solution were unsuccessful, and a permanent peace deal remained elusive.

Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020):

- **September 2020:** Azerbaijan launched a major military offensive aimed at reclaiming territories lost in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War. The offensive was characterized by the use of advanced military technologies, such as drones and heavy artillery.
- **Turkish Support:**

Turkey played a significant role in supporting Azerbaijan during the conflict, providing military aid, drones, and military advisors. This Turkish involvement significantly strengthened Azerbaijan's military capabilities, and it played a key role in the success of the offensive.

- **November 2020:**
 1. After **six weeks of intense fighting**, Azerbaijan made significant territorial gains, including the **strategic city of Shusha**, which is of cultural and military importance to both Azerbaijan and Armenia.
 2. The war ended with a ceasefire agreement brokered by **Russia**, which deployed **1,960 peacekeepers** to the region to oversee the ceasefire and maintain peace.
- **Outcome of the 2020 War:**
 1. Azerbaijan regained **seven surrounding districts** and parts of Nagorno-Karabakh.
 2. Armenia faced significant internal political turmoil, with protests against the government's handling of the war and the eventual ceasefire. The loss of territory and the terms of the ceasefire were seen as a humiliating defeat for Armenia.

2023 Azerbaijani Offensive & Armenian Withdrawal:

- **September 2023:** Azerbaijan launched a final military operation, fully capturing Nagorno-Karabakh and effectively ending Armenian claims over the region. The offensive resulted in the complete withdrawal of Armenian forces and the dissolution of the self-proclaimed **Republic of Artsakh**, which had governed Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population.
- **Mass Exodus of Armenians:**
 1. **Over 100,000 ethnic Armenians** fled the region, marking the effective end of Armenian control over Nagorno-Karabakh.
 2. The mass exodus led to the dissolution of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian administration, which had been functioning under the banner of the Republic of Artsakh since the 1990s.

Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Agreement (2025):

- **March 2025:** After decades of conflict, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a comprehensive **peace treaty**, which officially recognized each other's sovereignty.
- **Azerbaijan's Control:** Armenia formally accepted Azerbaijan's control over Nagorno-Karabakh, and both sides agreed to cooperate in building a framework for lasting peace.
- **Establishing Diplomatic Relations:**
 1. Both nations agreed to **establish diplomatic relations** and restore **trade routes**, which had been disrupted during the conflict.

2. The **border demarcation process** between the two countries has been initiated, with the aim of settling any remaining territorial disputes.

- **Geopolitical Impact:**

1. The conflict has had a significant impact on the geopolitics of the South Caucasus region, with Armenia traditionally supported by Russia, while Azerbaijan has had backing from Turkey.
2. The 2025 peace agreement provides a framework for **long-term stability** in the region, although challenges remain in terms of reconciliation and the reintegration of displaced populations.



India's Role:

- **Encouraging Peace:**

- India has consistently encouraged both Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve their differences through **dialogue** and **diplomacy**.
- India has emphasized the need for **long-term peace** and security in the region, promoting a peaceful resolution of the conflict to prevent further escalation and instability in the South Caucasus.

- **Strategic Implications for India:**

- India's role in supporting peace efforts has been important in shaping its relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The conflict's resolution could pave the way for India to deepen its ties in the region, which is strategically significant due to its proximity to critical trade routes and global geopolitical interests.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, with its deep ethnic, territorial, and historical roots, has profoundly influenced the South Caucasus region's political dynamics. The 2025 peace agreement marks a hopeful step towards stability, but the challenges of reintegrating displaced populations, rebuilding trust, and addressing humanitarian concerns remain significant.

Source: <https://www.uniindia.com/un-chief-welcomes-armenia-azerbaijan-agreement-on-peace-deal/world/news/3413863.html>