



Plenary sitting

B9-0149/2022

8.3.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh
(2022/2582(RSP))

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on behalf of the S&D Group

B9-0149/2022

**European Parliament resolution on the destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh
(2022/2582(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the universal dimension of cultural heritage, as a testimony of history inseparable from peoples' identity, which the international community has the duty to protect and preserve for future generations, beyond the conflicts of the moment;
- having regard to the obligations of Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of the Council of Europe, especially through the European Cultural Convention, the revised European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which they have ratified and undertaken to respect,
- having regard to its annual report on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy of 17 February 2022,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2021 on the prisoners of war in the aftermath of the most recent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan,
- having regard to its Resolution of 16 February 2006 on cultural heritage in Azerbaijan,
- having regard to the Unesco 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its 1954 Protocol, as applicable to occupied territories;
- having regard to the 2003 Unesco Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage, by which the international community recognises the importance of the protection of cultural heritage and reaffirms its commitment to combat its intentional destruction in any form so that such cultural heritage may be transmitted to the succeeding generations,
- having regard to the appeal of UNESCO of 9 October 2020 for the protection of heritage in this region and the absolute necessity of preventing any further damage.
- having regard to the report of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the UN Committee for Human Rights' intermediary report on freedom of worship and religion,
- having regard to the UN Security Council resolution 2347, which stresses that the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, looting and smuggling of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, including by terrorist groups can fuel and exacerbate conflicts and impede post-conflict national reconciliation, thus undermining the security, stability, governance and social, economic and cultural development of affected States;

- A. whereas during the 44-day war launched by Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020, Azerbaijani armed forces carried out a series of attacks on Armenian historical and cultural heritage, including churches, monasteries, archeological sites, cross-stones (khachkars), and other various monuments and shrines were destroyed, damaged or vandalized after those came under control of Azerbaijan;
- B. whereas during the war and its aftermath Azerbaijani servicemen themselves video recorded and widely disseminated on social media acts of vandalism, desecration and destruction of Armenian monuments, including churches; whereas such behaviour demonstrates lack of fear of any accountability for such acts and promotes such conduct;
- C. whereas the policy of destruction of Armenian heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh continued after the ceasefire agreement was signed on November 10, 2020, by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia;
- D. whereas the elimination of traces of Armenian cultural heritage in the Nagorno-Karabakh region takes place not only through its destruction and damaging, but also the falsification of history and attempts to present it as so-called "Caucasian Albanian"; whether, in this context, on 3 February 2022, the Minister of Culture of Azerbaijan, Anar Karimov, announced the establishment of a working group responsible for removing "the fictitious traces written by Armenians on Albanian religious temples";
- E. whereas Azerbaijan has a proven history of systematically destroying and damaging Armenian cultural monuments, the most notable of which was elimination of a medieval Armenian cemetery near the town of Julfa (known as Jugha in Armenian) in the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan of Azerbaijan from 1997-2006, which was known as the biggest and the most precious repository of about 2,000 masterpiece cross headstones - "khachkars,"
- F. whereas on 7 December 2021, the International Court of Justice indicated provisional measures in the case of Armenia v. Azerbaijan, ruling that Azerbaijan must "take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artifacts.";
- G. whereas after the November 10 2020 ceasefire, UNESCO has made a proposal both to Armenia and Azerbaijan to send an independent mission of experts to draw a preliminary inventory of significant historical and cultural heritage sites in and around Nagorno-Karabakh - as a first step towards the effective safeguarding of the region's heritage;
- H. whereas for the same purpose, the members of the intergovernmental Committee of the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Second Protocol (1999), adopted a declaration on December 11 2020 and welcomed UNESCO's initiative and confirmed the need for an independent assessment mission to Nagorno-Karabakh to take stock of the situation regarding cultural properties in and around Nagorno-Karabakh; whereas the Committee requested each of the parties to render the mission possible;
- I. whereas despite these efforts and the urgency of the matter as acknowledged by UNESCO, Azerbaijani Government have not duly responded to the mentioned request, thus creating obstacles and making impossible the access of UNESCO to the region;

- J. whereas the destruction or desecration of any monuments or objects of cultural, religious or national heritage infringes the principles of the European Union,
- K. whereas the European Neighbourhood Policy aims to establish a partnership with Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of common values, including the respect for minorities and their cultural heritage,
1. Strongly condemns the continued policy of Azerbaijan to erase and deny the Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, in violation of international law and the recent decision of the International Court of Justice;
 2. Acknowledges that the erasure of the Armenian cultural heritage is part of a wider pattern of a systemic, state-level policy of Armenophobia, history revisionism and hatred towards Armenians promoted by the Azerbaijani authorities, including dehumanization, glorification of violence and territorial claims against the Republic of Armenia which threaten peace and security in the South Caucasus; condemns the state-sponsored narratives on erasing Armenian Cultural Sites in favor for Caucasian Albanian so-called theory;
 3. Notes that the alleged actions perpetrated by Armenia in the past cannot be invoked to justify the attacks on cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh being perpetrated in the present by Azerbaijan;
 4. Welcomes the UNESCO's initiative, taken in conformity with Article 23 of the 1954 Hague Convention, to carry out as soon as possible an independent fact-finding mission, with the aim of assessing the status of the cultural property in all its forms as a prerequisite for the effective protection of heritage;
 5. Calls on Azerbaijan to provide immediate access to UNESCO to conduct such a fact-finding mission in territories controlled by Azerbaijan;
 6. Demands that the government of Azerbaijan respect its international commitments, notably as regards safeguarding cultural heritage, which Azerbaijan has undertaken as member of UNESCO and the Council of Europe as well as those commitments stemming from the Order of the International Court of Justice;
 7. Urges Azerbaijan to protect the right to access and enjoy Armenian historic, cultural and religious heritage, including but not limited to, churches, cathedrals, places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and other buildings and artefacts, by inter alia terminating, preventing, prohibiting and punishing their vandalisation, destruction or alteration, and allowing Armenians to visit places of worship;
 8. Stresses that respect for minority rights, including historical, religious and cultural heritage, is an essential prerequisite for an effective implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and creation of conditions conducive to post-war re-habilitation, genuine reconciliation and good neighbourly relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan;
 9. Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to continue supporting the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance and the work of international organisations in the area of the protection of cultural and religious heritage, as well as to support civil

society organisations in Armenia and Azerbaijan that genuinely contribute to reconciliation;

10. Reminds the European Commission of the importance that Azerbaijan fulfils its commitments to international law and as a member of UNESCO before extending the corridor to new energy markets or entering energy agreements with the country;
11. Invites the Commission and the Council to incorporate clauses on protecting archaeological and historical sites in Armenia and Azerbaijan into the action plans currently being devised in a European Neighbourhood Policy context;
12. Emphasizes the need to approach the matter of the protection of historical and cultural heritage within a broader framework of the conflict resolution between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the final definition of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh; in this context, calls on Azerbaijan to discard its maximalist aims, militaristic approach and territorial claims on Armenia and engage in good faith negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group on the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh; reminds that political historical revisionism and systematic disinformation and erasure of a country's cultural heritage is a severe form of violence which aggravate or extend the existing dispute and render it more difficult to resolve;
13. Calls on the Council and the EEAS to consider sending a civilian CSDP mission along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, given the impact of the current situation on the civilian population there, including with the aim to monitor the status of the historical and cultural properties in the region; calls on the Council and the EEAS to contribute to a border delimitation and demarcation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including through the OSCE;
14. Emphasizes that the disbursement of the 2 billion euro EU aid package to Azerbaijan and the progress of the negotiations on the future EU-Azerbaijan agreement should be made strictly conditional on Azerbaijan's respect for its international commitments on human rights, including regarding the preservation and protection of the cultural and historical heritage on the territories under its control;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Government and the President of Armenia, the Government and the President of Azerbaijan, as well as the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Director-General of Unesco, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations;