

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	259
Land:	Aserbajdsjan
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Country Report on Terrorism 2018 Chapter 1 - Azerbaijan
Udgivet:	oktober 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	3. februar 2020

Document #2019300

USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 1 - Azerbaijan

Overview: In 2018, the Azerbaijani government actively worked to deter, detect, and defeat terrorist efforts to move people, money, and materials across its land and maritime borders and within the South Caucasus. Azerbaijani law enforcement and security services conducted operations to disrupt and prevent terror attacks, arrested and prosecuted suspected terrorists, and prosecuted returning Azerbaijanis suspected of joining or financing terrorist groups fighting outside Azerbaijan.

2018 Terrorist Incidents: There were no reported terrorist incidents in Azerbaijan in 2018.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: In 2018, Azerbaijan passed an amendment to expand law enforcement agencies' legal authorities to monitor and control financial transaction mechanisms that the government perceives could be used to finance terrorism.

Azerbaijani law enforcement and security services have demonstrated adequate capacity to detect, deter, and prevent acts of terrorism in Azerbaijan's territory. Responsibility for counterterrorism is vested in several government agencies. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) is Azerbaijan's primary law enforcement agency, and its Organized Crime Unit is tasked with leading the Ministry's counterterrorism efforts. In July, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture reported that torture and other forms of physical mistreatment by police and other law enforcement agencies, corruption in the entire law enforcement system, and impunity remained systemic and endemic. The MIA cooperates closely with the State Security Service (SSS), Azerbaijan's domestic intelligence and counterterrorism service. The SSS is responsible for identifying and preventing criminal activities by terrorist groups and countering international terrorism and transnational crimes. NGOs reported that both the MIA and SSS detained individuals who exercised their rights to fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression.

The Special State Protection Service is a security agency under the Presidential Administration tasked with protecting the Azerbaijani president, visiting foreign heads of state and government, and critical infrastructure and strategic state resources, such as oil and gas pipelines. The State Border Service (SBS) and State Customs Committee jointly manage border security, and interdict terrorist efforts to move people, money, and materials – including weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – across Azerbaijan's

land and maritime borders. The SBS is also responsible for defending oil platforms against terrorism. The Prosecutor General’s Office is responsible for prosecuting suspects accused of terrorism, conspiracy to commit terrorism, conspiracy to aid terrorism, and other terrorism-related crimes. The government continued to use terrorism charges against religious activists involved in political activities and others they alleged were religious extremists.

Azerbaijan used terrorist and criminal watchlists and biographic/biometric screening at ports of entry. Azerbaijan’s law enforcement and security services share information among themselves, and with regional and international partners.

In 2018, Azerbaijani law enforcement and security services reported preventing several potential terrorist attacks, including:

- On November 14, the SSS reported that five individuals were killed and more than 60 arrested while resisting the police in operations following the July 3 attack on the former mayor of Ganja, Azerbaijan’s second largest city. Two police officers in subsequent demonstrations were also killed. The government alleged the attacks were part of a Shia “extremist conspiracy,” however human rights defenders claim authorities took advantage of criminal acts that were unrelated to religion to kill and detain religious activists.
- On November 23, according to press reports, the SSS reported the arrest of three individuals – Ilgar Agayev, Sahil Ibrahimov, and Namig Mammadov – suspected of financing terrorists in Syria.
- On December 9, the Baku Grave Crimes Court convicted Emin Guliyev, Asim Bakhishov, and Teyfur Aliverdiyev of fighting for al-Nusrah Front in Syria, and sentenced them to imprisonment of 13 years, nine years, and nine years, respectively.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Azerbaijan is a member of MONEYVAL, a FATF-style regional body. Azerbaijan’s FIU, the Financial Monitoring Service, is a member of the Egmont Group. In 2018, Azerbaijan continued implementing its “National Action Plan for 2017-2019 on combatting criminally acquired money, legalization of other properties, and financing of terrorism.”

For additional information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes* (<https://www.state.gov/2019-international-narcotics-control-strategy-report/>).

Countering Violent Extremism: Azerbaijan made no significant changes to its CVE efforts in 2018.

International and Regional Cooperation: Azerbaijan maintained membership in the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and other international bodies. Azerbaijan supports NATO counterterrorism initiatives as one of the Alliance’s Partnership for Peace countries. Azerbaijan participated in NATO’s Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, where Azerbaijan deployed 120 peacekeeping

troops, and contributed to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund. In June 2018, Azerbaijan hosted the International Contact Group conference to promote peace and security in Afghanistan.

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Annual report on terrorism (covering 2018)

Country:

Azerbaijan

Source:

USDOS – US Department of State [\(/en/source/11558.html\)](/en/source/11558.html)

Original link (no longer valid):

~~<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2018/#Azerbaijan>~~

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

1 November 2019

Document ID:

2019300

Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research
and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

