## Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	283
Land:	Aserbajdsjan
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Country Report on Terrorism 2019: Azerbaijan.
Udgivet:	24. juni 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	7. oktober 2020



## Azerbaijan

**Overview:** In 2019, 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.

**2019 Terrorist Incidents**: There were no reported terrorist incidents in Azerbaijan in 2019.

**Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security:** In 2019, Azerbaijan made no significant changes to the legislation on combating 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 CT efforts. The MIA cooperates closely with the State Security Service (SSS), Azerbaijan's domestic intelligence and CT service. The SSS is responsible for identifying and preventing criminal activities by terrorist groups and countering international terrorism and transnational crimes. Law enforcement and security agencies continued to exhibit wide discretion in determining what activities qualify as "terrorism" or "extremism," leaving political opponents and religious activists vulnerable to prosecution, detention, and physical mistreatment. Such individuals have been especially vulnerable to physical abuse by the MIA's organized crime unit. For further information, see the Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and International Religious Freedom Report*.

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 the State Customs Committee jointly manage border security, and interdict terrorist efforts to move people, money, and materials – including weapons of mass destruction – across Azerbaijan's land and maritime borders. The SBS is also responsible for defending offshore 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.

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 regarding terrorism matters.

**Countering the Financing of Terrorism:** Azerbaijan is a member of MONEYVAL.. Its FIU, the Financial Monitoring Service, is a member of the Egmont Group. In 2019,

Azerbaijan continued implementing its "National Action Plan for 2017-2019 on combating criminally acquired money, legalization of other properties, and financing of terrorism."

Countering Violent Extremism: The State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations announced in April it is jointly developing with the Ministry of Education and the Caucasus Muslim Board a religion course that will be included in the curriculum of public middle schools and public universities in Azerbaijan as early as September 2020. According to the Committee, the course would promote the state's "secular policy and help counter the spread of radical and fundamentalist movements."

International and Regional Cooperation: Azerbaijan maintained membership in the CoE, the OSCE, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and other international bodies. Azerbaijan supports NATO CT initiatives as one of the Alliance's Partnership for Peace countries. Azerbaijan participated in NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, where it deployed 120 peacekeeping troops, and contributed to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund.

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