

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Armenia and Azerbaijan: Ceasefire largely holds, but tensions remain

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In the first half of 2021, important political developments occurred in Armenia, and continued ceasefire violations took place along the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the *de facto* Artsakh Republic.³ As [warned](#) at the start of the year, sporadic cross-border violence has continued, if only at relatively low levels. Meanwhile, Armenia and Azerbaijan continue negotiations about the border dispute, the return of prisoners of war (POWs), and other issues related to the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. Contrary to previous assessments, the Armenian political situation has become relatively stable following a decisive electoral victory for the government in June. This victory came despite the government's recent military defeat by Azerbaijan and an economy still struggling to manage the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

Conflict between Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the *de facto* Republic of Artsakh remained low during the first half of 2021. Cross-border violence between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces decreased dramatically in 2021 relative to the year prior. Between January and June 2021, 33 clashes took place, compared to 2,600 during the same period in 2020. The decrease in fighting has been ensured by the presence of Russian peacekeeping troops in key areas of Armenia and Artsakh, who were deployed following the ceasefire of 9 November 2020 ([Reuters, 10 November 2021](#)).

Despite this notable decrease, tensions remain over lingering issues from the war. These include disputes

3. The disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. ACLED refers to the *de facto* state and its institutions as Artsakh — the name by which the *de facto* territory refers to itself. For more on methodology and coding decisions around *de facto* states, see this [methodology primer](#).

over borders, mapping information for minefields, POWs, and the recognition of the *de facto* Republic of Artsakh. While negotiations over some of these issues have not made much visible progress, there have been successes. Particularly prominent among these are negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the return of Armenian POWs in exchange for Armenian information about the location of minefields in territory captured by Azerbaijan. Since the 9 November ceasefire, 88 POWs have been returned to Armenia, the last two groups of which were returned in exchange for maps of minefields in the Agdam, Fizuli, and Zangilan regions ([Azatutyun, 13 June 2021](#)). Discussions over these topics are likely to continue for some time as the two sides use prisoners and minefields for political leverage. There are reportedly over 100 Armenians still held by Azerbaijan, suggesting that such exchanges may continue ([Azatutyun, 13 June 2021](#)).

Meanwhile, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party won a decisive victory in parliamentary elections on 20 June 2021. Pashinyan ran a campaign focused on recovering from the recent military defeat and continuing his party's popular anti-corruption and modernization initiatives ([Prime Minister of Armenia, 21 June 2021](#)). Former President Robert Kocharyan's party, Armenia Alliance, was the main competition for Civil Contract. Despite the recent defeat of Armenian forces under a Civil Contract government, Armenia Alliance was unable to generate enough public support to defeat Pashinyan, likely a result of the corruption allegations Kocharyan has faced over the years ([Carnegie Moscow Center, 6 October 2018](#)). Pashinyan's party won close to 54% of

the vote, with Kocharyan's party trailing at 21% ([DW, 21 June 2020](#)). All other parties received vote percentages too small to enter parliament, though the 'I Have Honor' alliance was admitted in order for a third party to be present, as legally required ([Factor, 21 June 2021](#)).

Sporadic clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops are likely to continue throughout the second half of 2021, as they have so far this year. Negotiations on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh and the outcome of the war are also unlikely to make major progress. The status of the remaining territories controlled by the *de facto* Artsakh Republic continues to be disputed, which may drive some small surges in fighting, as has happened sporadically along the frontline since the ceasefire. Meanwhile, tension over the opening of regional roads and railways, which was initiated by the 9 November agreement, will continue, especially given Azerbaijan's insistence on having a 'corridor' through the Syunik region of Armenia despite the Armenian government's refusal to broach any such discussion ([Azatutyun, 21 April 2021](#)).

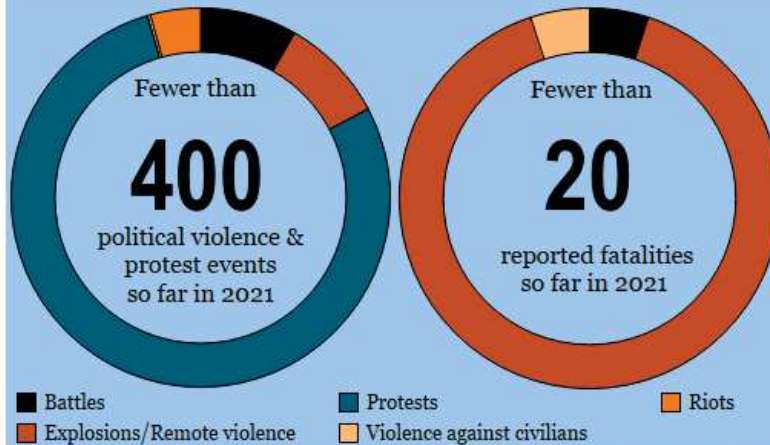
In the long term, the military situation may come to resemble the front before the 2020 war, with sporadic surges in fighting for tactically or strategically significant ground. However, unlike the period prior to the 2020 war, major offensive operations are extremely unfeasible for both sides. The deployment of Russian peacekeeping troops to Armenia has ensured that offensive action by Azerbaijan will be effectively impossible without massively increasing tensions with Russia and provoking a Russian military response. Meanwhile, the Armenian army is currently incapable of offensive action as it was severely damaged by the war, and was already militarily weak relative to Azerbaijan's forces ([Al Jazeera, 1 October 2020](#)). Since the ceasefire, Azerbaijan and Turkey have expanded their military cooperation, acting as a further deterrent to Armenia. With this situation unlikely to change, there is little chance that either side will resume major offensive operations similar to those seen in 2020.

FURTHER READING:

- [Civilians Under Fire in Nagorno-Karabakh: September-November 2020](#)
- [ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions around Political Conflict and Demonstrations in Central Asia & the Caucasus](#)

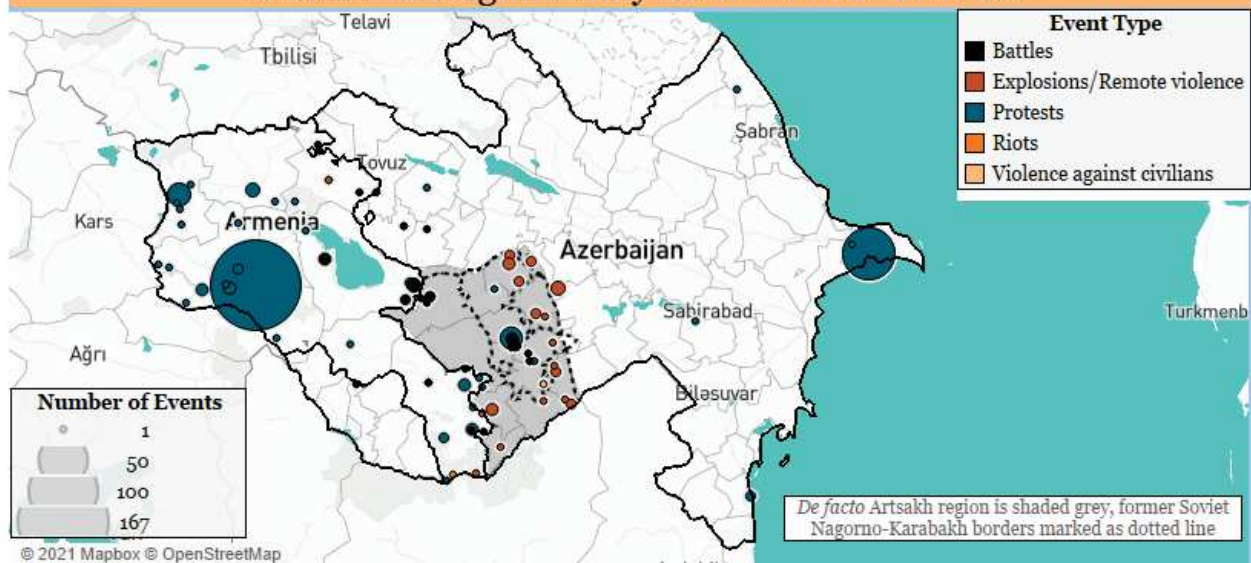
ARMENIA & AZERBAIJAN

Ceasefire largely holds, but tensions remain



In the first half of 2021, there have been important political developments in Armenia and continued ceasefire violations along the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the *de facto* Artsakh Republic. Sporadic cross-border violence continues as Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate border disputes, the return of prisoners of war, and other issues related to the fall 2020 war. Meanwhile, an election in Armenia resulted in a major victory for the ruling government, despite its recent military defeat by Azerbaijan and an economy still struggling to manage the fallout of the coronavirus.

Violence has significantly declined in 2021 so far



Ceasefire violations are at a low since the war's end



Cross-border violence between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces decreased dramatically in 2021. So far this year, 33 battles have taken place compared to 2,600 over the same period in 2020. Despite this notable decrease, tensions persist. Sporadic tactical clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops are likely to continue throughout 2021.

The disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. ACLED refers to the *de facto* state and its institutions as Artsakh — the name by which the *de facto* territory refers to itself.