



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies
Islamabad**

**International Community Rejects Election in
Nagorno-Karabakh Region**

By Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed, Assistant Professor Department of International Relations, University of Sargodha, Pakistan & Member Board of Experts, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad



Published on 7th April 2020

On March 31, 2020, Presidential and Parliamentary Elections were held in violation of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and Security Council (SC) resolutions in Upper Karabagh also known as Nagorno-Karabakh. It is the sovereign territory of the

Republic of Azerbaijan but illegally occupied by Armenian backed militants. In 1988 the war broke out between former Soviet republic Azerbaijan and Armenia over the region. In 1994 armistice was signed between the two.

In 1993, the UNSC passed resolutions e.g. 822, 853, 874 and 884. The UNs in its resolutions condemned Armenian illegal occupation of the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan. The UNs resolutions have declared Armenian backed military forces in Nagorno-Karabakh as occupying forces and presence is acknowledged illegal. The UNSC resolutions accept that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan. On March 14, 2008 UNGA also passed resolution GA/10693 on Nagorno-Karabakh issue to support Azerbaijan's stance.

Another important aspect of the conflict is Armenian backed militants forcefully expelled thousands of Azerbaijan's citizens from the region to change the demography of the region. Militants applied brutal force to inflict damage, killed approximately 30,000 innocent unarmed civilians and committed human rights violations. Mosques were demolished in the region. However, there is Armenian Church in central Baku with overall 40,000 Armenian ethnic population and they are living peacefully. Contrarily, Azerbaijanis expelled from their homes by Yerevan backed armed group cannot think of going back because of threats to their lives.

Prior to the illegal elections the Chairman of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) of Pakistan Justice (Retd) Ali Nawaz Chowhan on March 30, 2010, condemned the so-called scheduled "parliamentary and presidential elections." Chowhan stated that election by Armenia in occupied Nagorno-Karabakh is against all international norms" because the region is occupied by Armenia. He had also

recalled the international community the horrific killings of innocent people in the region by Armenian militants.

It is in this background author has stated that recently held elections in Nagorno-Karabakh region violate UNGA and UNSC resolutions. The claim made here by the author is supported by substantial verifiable proofs e.g. UN resolutions. All these resolutions are available at the UNs official websites and these can be easily accessed by the readers. Azerbaijan is supported by the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the light of UN resolutions. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan acknowledges that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan and refused to recognize Armenia due to its illegal occupation of Azerbaijan's sovereign territory. Islamabad emphasises withdrawal of Armenian militants and the return of Nagorno-Karabakh region to Azerbaijan. It supports the peaceful settlement of the conflict according to UNs resolutions.



Azerbaijan has deplored recently held election. The Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Leyla Abdullayeva stated that the "elections" ("presidential and parliamentary") in the Nagorno-Karabakh region shall have no legal effect whatsoever. Elections can only be held in the region under the Constitutional Framework of the country. Recently, a held election in Nagorno-Karabakh region is rejected by the international community. It undermines efforts to peacefully resolve the conflict. The significant aspect of this rejection is that the international community believes this election would undermine Azerbaijan's territorial sovereignty. Illegal election undermines the significance of UN resolution and international community's collective response.

Foreign Ministry of Turkey stated that recent election in Nagorno-Karabakh is "a flagrant violation of international law as well as UN Security Council resolutions and OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] principles." Ministry rightly brought Yerevan's efforts to unilaterally legitimize the unlawful occupation of the region. OIC in solidarity with Azerbaijan rejected the election by stating its official Twitter account. It stated that "OIC views the holding of elections in the occupied region of the Republic of Azerbaijan on March 31, 2020, as in contravention to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict." An important aspect of the statement includes recognition of the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh is the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan. Secondly, the conflict is not over hence, peaceful resolution is necessary for maintaining peace and stability of the region. Third, the election is a blatant

violation of the UNSC and UNGA resolutions and undermines normative strength of the international organization. Fourth, the election is illicit and illegitimate.

It is pertinent to assert that the election is held despite the threat of COVID-19. Thousands of Italians and American nationals infected with COVID-19 died in a single day. It is a contagious disease and transfers from human to human. Governments around the world are urging their citizens to stay at home, isolate and asking for social distancing. Large public gatherings make people vulnerable to infectious virus. The authoritarian regime in Nagorno-Karabakh thus put on risk lives of hundreds of people in danger. This fear was also expressed by Richard Giragosian, the founding director of the Regional Studies Center (RSC), an independent, Yerevan-based think tank. Members of the international community including Malaysia, United Kingdom, Moldova, Georgia and Canada rejected the elections. Officials of various organizations including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) also denounced the election. Armenia failed to realize that its desired objectives to change world opinion by holding controversial elections cannot be changed. The world unanimously agrees that the presence of Armenian militants and the illicit occupation of the region and seven adjacent districts Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Qubadli, and Zangilan cannot be legalized by holding sham elections.