



Azerbaijani Soldiers Desecrate Armenian Christian Cemetery

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The Washington, DC-based human rights group, International Christian Concern (ICC) www.persecution.org, has recently been informed that the government of Azerbaijan has destroyed an irreplaceable medieval Armenian Christian cemetery in the Djulfa region of Nakhichevan.

This act of cultural "cleansing" continues the spirit of the Armenian Genocide -- an attempt by the Muslim countries in the region to erase all memory of a thriving Christian culture that has existed in the Caucasus area since the fourth century AD. Although this atrocity is on the same level as the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in 2001 and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries throughout Europe, the US State Department has remained silent.

"We are profoundly troubled by the Azerbaijani government's desecration of the Armenian Christian cemetery in Djulfa - particularly the destruction of irreplaceable carved stone crosses, many over a thousand years old," said ICC president Jeff King. "The shocking videotape of the systematic demolition of this treasure of world Christian heritage documents for all to see a deliberate act of hatred against a long-persecuted Christian nation and - more broadly - an affront to all Christians around the world."

In mid-December of 2005, roughly 200 Azerbaijani soldiers were caught on videotape using sledgehammers to demolish a sacred site of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The cemetery dates back to the 7th Century and was once home to as many as 10,000 khatchkars (intricately carved stone-crosses). Sadly, this attack, which followed previous demolitions in 1998 and 2002, effectively destroyed this site - erasing forever a true treasure of world heritage.

In the years following the 1915 genocide of over 1.5 million Armenian, Hellenic, and Assyrian Christians, Azerbaijan and Turkey have sought to eradicate the historical memory of the thriving Christian presence in the Caucasus and Anatolia. The Christian Armenian legacy in this part of the world dates back to the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew and, later, Armenia's conversion to Christianity as a state religion in 301 AD.

Click [here](#) to watch the video of the destruction.

International Christian Concern

ICC is a Washington-DC based human rights organization that exists to help persecuted Christians worldwide. ICC delivers humanitarian aid, trains and supports persecuted pastors, raises awareness in the US regarding the problem of persecution, and is an advocate for the persecuted on Capitol Hill and the State Department. For additional information or for an interview, contact ICC at 800-422-5441. To be removed from this press release list, hit reply and put "remove from PR list" in the subject line.

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