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## KHOJALY GENOCIDE – 14<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

On 26 February 1992, an unprecedented massacre was committed against the Azerbaijani population in the town of Khojaly. This bloody tragedy involved the extermination and capture of thousands of Azerbaijanis. The town was razed to the ground.



*“Before Khojaly the Azerbaijanis thought that... the Armenians were people who could not raise their hands against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]”*

Serge Sarkissian  
Defence Minister of Armenia<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tomas de Waal. *Black Garden*, (NYU Press. 2003), p.85.

On the night of 25/26 February 1992, the Armenian armed forces with the help of the infantry guards regiment No. 366 of the former USSR seized Khojaly - a small town situated in the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the total area of 0.94 sq. km. and a population of 23,757.



*Azerbaijani child murdered during the extermination of the population of the town of Khojaly*

Inhabitants of Khojaly that remained in the town before the tragic night (about 2500 people) tried to leave their houses after the assault began in the hope to find the way to the nearest shelter, but they failed. The invaders destroyed Khojaly and, with particular brutality, implemented carnage over its peaceful population.



*Bayoneted pregnant woman and her dead fetus*

As a result, 613 persons were killed, including 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly people. 1,275 inhabitants were taken hostage, while the fate of 150 persons remains unknown to this day. In the course of the tragedy 487 inhabitants of Khojaly

were severely maimed, including 76 children not yet of age. 6 families were completely wiped out, 26 children lost both parents, and 130 children one of their parents. Of those perished, 56 persons were killed with special cruelty: by burning alive, scalping, beheading, gouging out of eyes, and bayoneting of pregnant women in the abdomen.

**Pascal Privat and Steve Le Vine of *Newsweek* in the article “The face of massacre” reported: “Azerbaijan was a charnel house again last week: a place of mourning refugees and dozens of mangled corpses dragged to a makeshift morgue behind the mosque. They were ordinary Azerbaijani men, women and children of Khojaly, a small village in war-torn Nagorno-Karabakh overrun by Armenian forces on 25-26 February. Many were killed at close range while trying to flee; some had their faces mutilated, others were scalped”.**<sup>2</sup>



*Remnants of a man, who was burnt alive*

In Azerbaijan, the date of 26 February is proclaimed the Day of Khojaly Genocide and National Mourning. A minute of silence is kept every year on 26 February at 5:00 pm to honour the memory of the victims of the tragedy.

The moral consciousness of the world demands an adequate account for this massacre as an act of genocide and remembrance of its victims just as those of Baby Yar, Oswiecim, Khatyn Srebrenica and Rwanda.

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<sup>2</sup> *Newsweek*, 16 March 1992.