

# ***THE AZERBAIJANI PERSPECTIVE:***

*News from the Caspian's West Coast*

*January 19, 2007 – Los Angeles, California*

## **“Black January” Remembered**

On January 20, 1990, the Soviet troops attacked Azerbaijan's capital city of Baku. Indiscriminate violence against civilians was the Kremlin's response to popular demands for greater sovereignty and an end of the Communist regime.

Among the 137 murdered and over 700 injured none was armed. The victims of the attack represented Azerbaijan diverse society, among them 7-year old boy, a newly married couple, an 80-year old man, a 16-year old girl, a doctor shot in an ambulance, and many others.

The attack in Baku had been unprecedented in its brutality, yet the Soviet regime used indiscriminate force against civilians to suppress dissent earlier in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Tbilisi, Georgia, in 1986 and 1989, respectively, and in Vilnius, Lithuania a year later. The Human Rights Watch report described “numerous attacks on medical personnel, ambulances and even hospitals.” The report further states: “the punishment inflicted on Baku by Soviet soldiers may have been intended as a warning to nationalists, not only in Azerbaijan, but in other Republics of the Soviet Union.”

Instead, for many Azerbaijanis, the tragedy of January 20, 1990 only strengthened their resolve for independence. The Republic of Azerbaijan restored its independence in 1991 and soon afterwards become the first post-Soviet republic with no foreign troops on its soil. The hilltop monument to the victims on Baku's hilltop stands as the reminder of the price paid for Azerbaijan's freedom.

## ***In other news:***

\*President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the importance of unity among the Azerbaijanis worldwide in his address on the December 31 World Azerbaijani Solidarity Day. In Los Angeles, members of the Azerbaijani community joined the Consulate General in celebrating the Solidarity Day.

\*On January 6, President Aliyev congratulated Azerbaijan's Christian Orthodox community with Christmas and reiterated his commitment to upholding the long-standing traditions of diversity, multiculturalism and religious tolerance.

\*Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey agreed on January 13 to build the strategic railway, which will connect the three nations and open new opportunities for linkages along the historic Silk Route between Europe and Asia. Azerbaijan is loaning \$ 200 million to Georgia as part of the agreement.

\*In a move described by Georgian President Mikhael Saakashvili as “historic example of brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia,” Azerbaijan began delivery of natural gas to Georgia at a deep discount. Both nations faced pressures as Russia's gas monopoly GAZPROM steeply raised its prices in advance of the winter season. In related news, Azerbaijan's State Oil Company acquired the Kulevi oil terminal on Georgia's Black Sea coast.

\*In a scheduled rotation, 90 Azerbaijani servicemen began their tour of duty as part of the coalition forces in Iraq.

*The Azerbaijani Perspective* is compiled from various new sources and is edited by the Consulate General of Azerbaijan, 11766 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1410 Los Angeles, CA 90025 tel: (310) 444-9101; fax: (310) 477-4860; email: [office@azconsulatela.org](mailto:office@azconsulatela.org) [www.azconsulatela.org](http://www.azconsulatela.org)