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PERPETRATORS

This page identifies perpetrators of the conflict in Artsakh, highlighting: (i) mercenary leaders hired and supported by Turkey; (ii) Turkish commanders overseeing and advising the operations; and (iii) Azerbaijani military actors commanding soldiers and mercenaries. It also establishes connections between the groups. Sources are hyperlinked, so readers can access additional sources.

Jihadi Mercenary Leaders**1. Sayf Balud, also known as Sayf Abu Bakr (https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/November-2018_MLM.pdf) (Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/sefiebubekir1>))**

Balud has been the leader of the Syrian National Army (SNA)'s Hamza Division since 2016 (https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/November-2018_MLM.pdf), which participated in Operation Olive Branch (<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/241182>) (Afrin) and more recently the Libyan Civil War (<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-send-syrian-rebel-fighters-fight-haftar-libya>), both with Turkish patronage (<https://armenian.usc.edu/turkish-syrian-mercenary-groups-in-karabakh-fighting-an-updated-compilation/>). He and approximately 500 of his men were reportedly (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/turkey-sends-sayf-balud-isis-warlord-to-azerbaijan-to-face-off-against-putins-armenian-allies>) flown to Azerbaijan to join fighting in Artsakh. Balud is a Syrian Turkman (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/turkey-sends-sayf-balud-isis-warlord-to-azerbaijan-to-face-off-against-putins-armenian-allies>), an ethnic characteristic that often enhances Turkish trust in "sensitive" operations (such as recent proxy conflicts). In 2013, he appeared in an ISIS propaganda video (<http://www.aymennjawad.org/2020/10/factcheck-was-sayf-abu-bakr-an-islamic-state>). Balud and his division have been responsible for multiple war crimes, including kidnapping Kurdish women (<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/22520-Syrian-Kurds-call-for-investigation-into-kidnapping-of-women-in-Afrin>) and brutal repression in Afrin. He is one of Turkey's most trusted and supported (https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/November-2018_MLM.pdf) mercenary leaders.

Sources and additional reading: Jamestown Foundation (https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/November-2018_MLM.pdf); Naharnet (<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/241182>); Middle East Eye (<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-send-syrian-rebel-fighters-fight-haftar-libya>); USC-Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies (<https://armenian.usc.edu/turkish-syrian-mercenary-groups-in-karabakh-fighting-an-updated-compilation/>) (IAS); Daily Beast (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/turkey-sends-sayf-balud-isis-warlord-to-azerbaijan-to-face-off-against-putins-armenian-allies>); Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/syrian-rebel-fighters-prepare-to-deploy-to-azerbaijan-in-sign-of-turkeys-ambition>); Aymenn Jawadd (<http://www.aymennjawad.org/2020/10/factcheck-was-sayf-abu-bakr-an-islamic-state>); National Post (<https://nationalpost.com/news/armenia-azerbaijan-accuse-each-other-of-cross-border-attacks-civilian-toll-climbsv>); Kurdistan24 (<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/22520-Syrian-Kurds-call-for-investigation-into-kidnapping-of-women-in-Afrin>); ArmenPress (<https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1029176.html>)

[_cf_chl_captchaTk__=3ede81didac89a1975c35978747f7f86eb9fc19-1601838050-0-AZVmNeSGXOWcYayAdnWb2NS638MKOInnlKnlvIIH-9CpBZl6NiMQLrATGqMWU_HwtiCrkKBKeX5aV48cJcJ32nTLZV13vSGAtqfqbJkSPxJQO4zfx2cr1Y4JDD-n_WcjQBOEz-VHjHlwJFoRC1NHjxoYFQSVHNF5bomwJlIalHDysSohx7ony-7UxE89AvAvQx8bZY7Wnhl6Eqdo8aRrsoAlN3haNm9GzPZkEaqPVfQClqZwXHUOOAGJxg_dukU3WIB56_Usep3Lg5hDKkqTsDAZSn8Y5UuxBZ-6auULyT-bBu2ygChV2wKszOimudjPB8IG6EX4vR6jo2NMApiiCGRtnqCmBhG2mzy1HEeaLwBi6-TCYTF4NMsrj7wCAHuvKhKkstsEZi-LZYC3oOFEX3JAEbxBW1UZDhYiBfG-rRY49gSp6owSY8KMYtNeWYkElgKaqNRAsAzBeanGopXoM5kOxZxZ9P8u5HE3zTEbE3Pzngbfvp5cmD5u2_AHrKYgDdd-InfemCpVoIS4pXpXGXw_1GRqVHI7xDoIAs8B92yN_anK7Sfjz2yQpApjBp-votNRDrhWyenKYHwImQ\)](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/syrian-rebel-fighters-prepare-to-deploy-to-azerbaijan-in-sign-of-turkeys-ambition)

2. Fehim Isa, possibly also known as Isa al-Turkmani (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0SD16O20151019>) (Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/fehimsa1?lang=en>))

Isa has led the SNA's Sultan Murad Division since at least 2015 (<http://sultanmurattumeni.com/entry/sultan-murat-tugayi-komutani-fehim-isanin-turkiyedeki-secim-konusmasi>), through which he has been directly involved in Operation Euphrates Shield (<http://www.understandingwar.org/background/turkish-incursion-northern-syria-signals-turning-point-anti-isis-fight>), Operation Olive Branch (<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/syria-operation-olive-branch-kurdish-fighters-fsa-afirin-ypg.html>), and the Libyan Civil War (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/libya-war-haftar-gna-syria-russia-wagner-uae-tripoli-a9566736.html>). Like Balud, he has enjoyed Turkish patronage (<https://armenian.usc.edu/turkish-syrian-mercenary-groups-in-karabakh-fighting-an-updated-compilation/>) and is an ethnic Turkman (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/turkey-sends-sayf-balud-isis-warlord-to-azerbaijan-to-face-off-against-putins-armenian-allies>). According to reports, he and his division have also engaged in Artsakh (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/syrian-rebel-fighters-prepare-to-deploy-to-azerbaijan-in-sign-of-turkeys-ambition>) with support from Turkey. There were rumors of Isa's resignation in 2017, however by early 2018 he was confirmed (<http://sultanmurattumeni.com/entry/2-kolordu-sultan-murat-tuemeni-komutanimiz-fehim-isa-afirin-i-boeluecuc-teroer-oerquetue-pyd-pkk-dan-kurtarma-operasyonu-sadece-bir-saat-suerdue-allah-in-izniyle>) as Sultan Murad's commander. He and his division have also been accused of multiple war crimes, such as the torturing (<https://web.archive.org/web/20171021025349/http://aranews.net/2016/09/ypg-holds-turkey-backed-rebels-accountable-torturing-kurdish-fighters/>) of Kurdish soldiers and indiscriminate shelling (<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/syria-armed-opposition-group-committing-war-crimes-aleppo-new-evidence>) of civilians.

Sources and additional reading: Reuters (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0SD16O20151019>) (1); Sultan Murad Division website (<http://sultanmurattumeni.com/entry/sultan-murat-tugayi-komutani-fehim-isanin-turkiyedeki-secim-konusmasi>) (1); ISW (<http://www.understandingwar.org/background/turkish-incursion-northern-syria-signals-turning-point-anti-isis-fight>); al-Monitor (<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/syria-operation-olive-branch-kurdish-fighters-fsa-afirin-ypg.html>); Independent (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/libya-war-haftar-gna-syria-russia-wagner-uae-tripoli-a9566736.html>); IAS (<https://armenian.usc.edu/turkish-syrian-mercenary-groups-in-karabakh-fighting-an-updated-compilation/>); Daily Beast (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/turkey-sends-sayf-balud-isis-warlord-to-azerbaijan-to-face-off-against-putins-armenian-allies>); Reuters (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0SD16O20151019>) (2); Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/syrian-rebel-fighters-prepare-to-deploy-to-azerbaijan-in-sign-of-turkeys-ambition>); Sultan Murad Division Website (<http://sultanmurattumeni.com/entry/2-kolordu-sultan-murat-tuemeni-komutanimiz-fehim-isa-afirin-i-boeluecuc-teroer-oerquetue-pyd-pkk-dan-kurtarma-operasyonu-sadece-bir-saat-suerdue-allah-in-izniyle>) (2); AraNews (<https://web.archive.org/web/20171021025349/http://aranews.net/2016/09/ypg-holds-turkey-backed-rebels-accountable-torturing-kurdish-fighters/>); Amnesty International (<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/syria-armed-opposition-group-committing-war-crimes-aleppo-new-evidence>); Rudaw (<https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/010920164>)

3. Abu Amsha, real name Muhammad al-Jassim (<https://vdc-nsy.com/en/archives/4033>)

Amsha is the leader of the Suleyman Shah Brigade, nicknamed the al-Amshat militia, which gained prominence ~2018 as one of the most brutal factions (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Mercenaries/WG/OtherStakeholders/syrians-for-truth-and-justice-submission.pdf>) occupying Afrin with Turkish support. In Afrin, al-Amshat supposedly confiscated property (<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/315d6903-c40d-4c6f-a285-6457c66b581f>), kidnapped (<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/315d6903-c40d-4c6f-a285-6457c66b581f>) individuals for ransom, looted, raped, and murdered (<https://www.syriahr.com/en/101137/>). Amsha has been directly implicated in these war crimes, making 12 million dollars in a year (<http://afripost.net/en/2020/12/in-just-one-year-abu-amsha-got-12-million-dollars-from-ransoms-and-royalties-in-shiye-district-of-afirin/>) from ransoms. He was also accused of rape and murder (<https://www.syriahr.com/en/101137/>). Turkish protection (<https://vdc-nsy.com/en/archives/4033>) has reportedly allowed him to avoid punishment for these acts. He is also a Syrian Turkman (<http://afripost.net/en/2020/12/in-just-one-year-abu-amsha-got-12-million-dollars-from-ransoms-and-royalties-in-shiye-district-of-afirin/>), like Isa and Balud. Following Afrin, Amsha has also been an important recruiter (<http://afripost.net/en/2020/12/in-just-one-year-abu-amsha-got-12-million-dollars-from-ransoms-and-royalties-in-shiye-district-of-afirin/>) for Turkish-backed mercenaries in Libya (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/libya-war-haftar-gna-syria-russia-wagner-uae-tripoli-a9566736.html>), and he and his division have fought in Artsakh (<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/role-foreign-fighters-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-27764>) at Turkey's request.

Sources and additional reading: VDC-NSY (<https://vdc-nsy.com/en/archives/4033>); Lindsey Snell on Twitter (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Mercenaries/WG/OtherStakeholders/syrians-for-truth-and-justice-submission.pdf>); Kurdistan24 (<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/315d6903-c40d-4c6f-a285-6457c66b581f>); SyriaHR (1 (<https://www.syriahr.com/en/146233/>), 2 (<https://www.syriahr.com/en/101137/>), 3 (<https://www.syriahr.com/en/101137/>)); AfrinPost (<http://afripost.net/en/2020/12/in-just-one-year-abu-amsha-got-12-million-dollars-from-ransoms-and-royalties-in-shiye-district-of-afirin/>); Independent (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/libya-war-haftar-gna-syria-russia-wagner-uae-tripoli-a9566736.html>); ISPI (<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/role-foreign-fighters-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-27764>); Asia News ([http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Turkey-sends-4,000-Syrian-ISIS-mercenaries-to-fight-against-the-Armenians-\(VIDEO\)-51151.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Turkey-sends-4,000-Syrian-ISIS-mercenaries-to-fight-against-the-Armenians-(VIDEO)-51151.html))

4. Others (no direct link to Artsakh, but to the organizations fighting there)

a. *Ahmed Osman*, another military leader (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Mercenaries/WG/OtherStakeholders/syrians-for-truth-and-justice-submission.pdf>) of the Sultan Murad Division who was involved in Operation Euphrates Shield (<https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/turkish-forces-and-rebels-storm-syria-taking-stronghold-jarablus>), Operation Olive Branch (<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/syria-operation-olive-branch-kurdish-fighters-fsa-afirin-ypg.html>), and the Libyan Civil War (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Mercenaries/WG/OtherStakeholders/syrians-for-truth-and-justice-submission.pdf>).

b. *Abu Jalal*, once a military leader (<https://rfsmediaoffice.com/en/2016/09/22/al-hamza-brigade/#.V-QMaJN95AY>) of the Hamza Division; current status unknown.

c. *Mohammad al-Abdullah*, described in 2016 (<https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/30820/>) as the Hamza Division's "Head of Political Bureau".

d. *Fadlallah al-Haji*, a Turkish protégé (<https://theArabweekly.com/will-turkey-abandon-its-proxies-idlib>) and head of Faylaq al-Sham, an important Turkish proxy fighting in Syria, Libya, and Artsakh (<https://www.barrons.com/news/faylaq-al-sham-turkey-s-favoured-syrian-proxy-faction-01603733108>). Al-Haji and his men have connections (<https://www.barrons.com/news/faylaq-al-sham-turkey-s-favoured-syrian-proxy-faction-01603733108>) to the Muslim Brotherhood and fought with al-Qaeda (<https://www.barrons.com/news/faylaq-al-sham-turkey-s-favoured-syrian-proxy-faction-01603733108>) in Idlib. He reportedly resigned (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/syrians-are-increasingly-recognizing-turkeys-disrupting-role-syria>) in November 2020.

Sources and additional reading: OHCHR (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Mercenaries/WG/OtherStakeholders/syrians-for-truth-and-justice-submission.pdf>); VOA News (<https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/turkish-forces-and-rebels-storm-syria-taking-stronghold-jarablus>); al-Monitor (<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/syria-operation-olive-branch-kurdish-fighters-fsa-afirin-ypg.html>); RFS Media Office (<https://rfsmediaoffice.com/en/2016/09/22/al-hamza-brigade/#.V-QMaJN95AY>); Middle East Eye (<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-sends-kurdish-falcon-force-afirin-counter-anti-kurd-image>); Zaman Al Wasl (<https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/30820/>); Arab Weekly (<https://theArabweekly.com/will-turkey-abandon-its-proxies-idlib>); Barrons (<https://www.barrons.com/news/faylaq-al-sham-turkey-s-favoured-syrian-proxy-faction-01603733108>); Washington Institute (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/syrians-are-increasingly-recognizing-turkeys-disrupting-role-syria>)

Turkish Commanders and Other Personnel

1. Defense Minister *Hulusi Akar*

Akar, Turkish Defense Minister since 2018, was one of the first Turkish officials to make public threats (<https://armenian.usc.edu/turkey-weighs-in-for-azerbaijan-and-against-armenia/>) against Armenia after Azerbaijani aggression in July 2020. In a meeting with Azerbaijani high command that month, he pledged Turkey's support (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.haberturk.com/bakan-hulusi-akar-dan-ermenistan-a-sert-tepki-2746192>) to the Azerbaijani cause in Artsakh. Following that meeting, Turkish weapon shipments (<https://armenian.usc.edu/turkey-weighs-in-for-azerbaijan-and-against-armenia/>) were delivered

to Azerbaijan. Akar was in Baku (https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4537733?from%3Dmain_1%23id1960749) on September 28-30 and played an important role overseeing all operations (https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4537733?from%3Dmain_1%23id1960749) in Artsakh. His Ph.D was on WWI-era Armenia and American views of the Armenian Genocide, which Turkey still denies.

Sources and additional readings: USC Institute of Armenian Studies (<https://armenian.usc.edu/turkey-weighs-in-for-azerbaijan-and-against-armenia/>); Haberturk (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.haberturk.com/bakan-hulusi-akar-dan-ermenistan-a-sert-tepki-2746192>)(translated); Kommersant.ru (https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4537733?from%3Dmain_1%23id1960749); Bogazici University (<https://ata.boun.edu.tr/phd-dissertations/hulusi-akar>) (Akar's dissertation abstract); Emil Sanamyan on Twitter (<http://www.humanrightscolumbia.org/node/127285/edit>)

2. Lieutenant General Şeref Öngay

Öngay is the Commander of the Third Army of the Turkish Ground Forces (<https://atalayar.com/en/content/erdogans-authoritarian-drift-reaches-supreme-military-council>), which is based in eastern Turkey and has responsibility for the Caucasus. Öngay had his contract extended (<https://atalayar.com/en/content/erdogans-authoritarian-drift-reaches-supreme-military-council>) at a time when Erdogan was purging the military, which implies trust from and loyalty to the higher-ups. The Armenian delegation at OSCE (https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/472074_o.pdf) say he "took part in planning and conducting" Artsakh operations. He was also spotted in Azerbaijan (<https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2020/9/free/politics%20news/en/127320.htm>) on 4 September 2020, as well as October, planning joint operations with the Azerbaijani military.

Sources and additional reading: Atalayar (<https://atalayar.com/en/content/erdogans-authoritarian-drift-reaches-supreme-military-council>); OSCE (https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/472074_o.pdf); Turan (<https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2020/9/free/politics%20news/en/127320.htm>); Memri (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>)

3. Major General Bahtiyar Ersay

Ersay, whose title (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>) is officially "Chief of the Operations Directorate of the Land Forces of Turkey," oversaw (https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/472074_o.pdf) the Azerbaijani General Staff in Artsakh following the sacking of former Azerbaijani Chief of Staff Najmeddin Sadikov (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>). He previously led the 2nd Commando Brigade (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>) against the PKK, which was notoriously cruel (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>) against Kurdish civilians and soldiers (and contained Grey Wolves elements). Ersay was confirmed to reside in Azerbaijan as recently as March 15th 2021, using the title "Commander of the Turkish Mission in Azerbaijan (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://razm.info/150627>)". Since the Azerbaijani Chief of the General Staff still remains vacant, and Ersay has been seen wearing Azerbaijani military attire (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://razm.info/150627>), it is likely he is *de facto* in charge of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces.

Ersay was also involved in Syria (<https://asbarez.com/199540/turkish-generals-led-war-on-artsakh-this-was-a-turkish-not-azeri-victory/>) and Libya (<https://asbarez.com/199540/turkish-generals-led-war-on-artsakh-this-was-a-turkish-not-azeri-victory/>), potentially recruiting and overseeing the mercenaries (<https://asbarez.com/199540/turkish-generals-led-war-on-artsakh-this-was-a-turkish-not-azeri-victory/>) that fought there. Because of this and his commando past, he is likely the Turkish commander most directly involved with these jihadi mercenaries. Ersay was also implicated in Operation Sledgehammer (<https://asbarez.com/199540/turkish-generals-led-war-on-artsakh-this-was-a-turkish-not-azeri-victory/>), an early-2000s coup attempt against Erdogan. He was released without serving much of his sentence (<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bavuldaki-kahraman-40226213>) and the facts of his case remain unclear.

Sources and additional reading: Memri (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>); OSCE (https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/472074_o.pdf); Asbarez (<https://asbarez.com/199540/turkish-generals-led-war-on-artsakh-this-was-a-turkish-not-azeri-victory/>); Hurriyet (<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bavuldaki-kahraman-40226213>); Razm (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://razm.info/150627>)(translated)

4. Major General Göksel Kahya

Kahya is an important Turkish drone commander who heads the Turkish Air Force's 1st Supply and Maintenance Center (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>). Prior to the Artsakh conflict, he led the deployment of Turkish (<https://almarsad.co/en/2019/06/30/bayraktar-killer-drones-run-by-turkish-military-experts-in-tripoli-exclusive-al-marsad-report>) Bayraktar TB2 drones in the Libyan Civil War. This drone expertise was then shifted to Azerbaijan (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>), where he was based since July 2020 and oversaw (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://geopoliticalcyprus.org/2020/09/29/update-nagorno-karabakh/>) the well-documented use of TB2 drones (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://geopoliticalcyprus.org/2020/09/29/update-nagorno-karabakh/>). These drones both were instrumental (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/air-and-missile-war-nagorno-karabakh-lessons-future-strike-and-defense>) for the Azerbaijani victory in the conflict and made possible the devastating human rights (<https://ombuds.am/images/files/de3634c257bb698735db318a33f280bf.pdf>) abuses against civilians.

Sources and additional reading: Memri (<https://www.memri.org/reports/russian-media-outlet-vzru-azerbaijani-army-being-purged-officers-and-generals-who-started>); al-Marsad (<https://almarsad.co/en/2019/06/30/bayraktar-killer-drones-run-by-turkish-military-experts-in-tripoli-exclusive-al-marsad-report>); Geopolitical Cyprus (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://geopoliticalcyprus.org/2020/09/29/update-nagorno-karabakh/>) (translated); OSCE (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://geopoliticalcyprus.org/2020/09/29/update-nagorno-karabakh/>); CSIS (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/air-and-missile-war-nagorno-karabakh-lessons-future-strike-and-defense>); Human Rights Defender of Armenia (<https://ombuds.am/images/files/de3634c257bb698735db318a33f280bf.pdf>); Washington Post (https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/nagorno-karabakh-drones-azerbaijan-aremenia/2020/11/11/441bcbd2-193d-11eb-8bda-814ca56e138b_story.html)

5. Adnan Tanrıverdi

Tanrıverdi is a retired Turkish general and the founder of SADAT Inc. (<https://www.sadat.com.tr/en/>) International Defense Consultancy, a private defense contracting company started in 2012. He was forced to resign from the military in 1996 (<https://sofrep.com/news/sadat-the-turkish-mercenaries-who-support-islamist-groups/>) due to Islamist affiliations and has filled SADAT with other hardline Islamists (<https://www.duvarenglish.com/columns/2020/02/22/sadat-the-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse>). Tanrıverdi has significant influence over Erdogan, using SADAT against Erdogan enemies in the "coup" in 2016 (<https://www.duvarenglish.com/columns/2020/02/22/sadat-the-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse>), and helping re-organize (<https://www.duvarenglish.com/columns/2020/02/22/sadat-the-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse>) and purge the Turkish Armed Forces. As a result, SADAT has been referred to as a shadow military (<https://www.duvarenglish.com/columns/2020/02/22/sadat-the-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse>). Reportedly, he and SADAT have played an important role in recruiting, equipping, and transporting about 3,000 Syrian mercenaries (<https://ahvalnews.com/sadat/turkish-military-contractor-sadat-has-always-been-libya>) to both Libya and Artsakh (<https://atalayar.com/en/content/how-does-turkey-transfer-mercenaries-azerbaijan>). Importantly, SADAT is also the primary organization training (<https://jiss.org.il/en/yanarocak-spyer-turkish-militias-and-proxies/>) these Turkish-backed mercenary proxies. Though he lacks any official position in the Turkish government/military, his influence is significant (<https://www.duvarenglish.com/columns/2020/02/22/sadat-the-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse>).

Sources and additional reading: SADAT website (<https://www.sadat.com.tr/en/>); SOFREP (<https://sofrep.com/news/sadat-the-turkish-mercenaries-who-support-islamist-groups/>); Duvar English (<https://www.duvarenglish.com/columns/2020/02/22/sadat-the-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse/>); Ahval (<https://ahvalnews.com/sadat/turkish-military-contractor-sadat-has-always-been-libya/>); Atalayar (<https://atalayar.com/en/content/how-does-turkey-transfer-mercenaries-azerbaijan/>); al-Monitor (<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/10/turkey-russia-syria-fighter-transfers-azerbaijan-armenia.html>)

For more information about SADAT, Turkey, and SNA proxy fighters in Artsakh and elsewhere, read this research report (<https://jiss.org.il/en/yanarocak-spyer-turkish-militias-and-proxies/>) by the JISS on the subject. (*This research was jointly initiated by JISS in Israel and Trends in the UAE, a first joint effort toward implementing the Abraham Accords between Israel and a number of key Arab nations.*)

Azerbaijani Commanders

1. Lieutenant General Hikmat Mirzayev (Hikmet Mirzeyev)

Born in 1969 in Bilesuvar district, Mirzayev is the head of the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry's special forces command (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.azerbaycan24.com/general-hikmet-mirzeyev-ve-aprel-doyuslerinin-qehremanlari-herbi-paradda/>), which played a leading role in the 2016 (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.azerbaycan24.com/general-hikmet-mirzeyev-ve-aprel-doyuslerinin-qehremanlari-herbi-paradda/>) and 2020 (<https://www.rferl.org/a/technology-tactics-and-turkish-advice-lead-azerbaijan-to-victory-in-nagorno-karabakh/30949158.html>) conflict. Many special forces members were also trained by Turkey (<https://www.rferl.org/a/technology-tactics-and-turkish-advice-lead-azerbaijan-to-victory-in-nagorno-karabakh/30949158.html>), and therefore Mirzayev has likely worked with the Turkish high command in the past. With Turkish backing, special forces were also utilized much more (<https://www.rferl.org/a/technology-tactics-and-turkish-advice-lead-azerbaijan-to-victory-in-nagorno-karabakh/30949158.html>) in 2020. Personnel under Mirzayev's command engaged in war crimes and atrocities, including the killing of civilians (<https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785>), body mutilation, and beheadings, both in 2016 and 2020. For example, in 2020, special forces (<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2020/10/15/an-execution-in-hadrut-karabakh/>) under his command were likely responsible for the execution of two Armenians (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54645254>) in Hadrut, two beheadings (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/15/two-men-beheaded-in-videos-from-nagorno-karabakh-war-identified>), and numerous war crimes in Shushi (see below). For more information about 2016 atrocities, see this document (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cNH1EbVUgCtIGsJB-zLrwcUyYj-VGUiU/view?usp=sharing>) by Emil Sanamyan (who has been an instrumental help on this project).

Sources and additional reading: Azerbaycan24 (<https://www.azerbaycan24.com/en/hikmat-mirzayev-promoted-to-lieutenant-general/>) (1); Azerbaycan24 (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.azerbaycan24.com/general-hikmet-mirzeyev-ve-aprel-doyuslerinin-qehremanlari-herbi-paradda/>) (2, translated); RadioFreeEurope (<https://www.rferl.org/a/technology-tactics-and-turkish-advice-lead-azerbaijan-to-victory-in-nagorno-karabakh/30949158.html>); Artsakh Ombudsman (<https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785>); BBC (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54645254>); Bellingcat (<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2020/10/15/an-execution-in-hadrut-karabakh/>); The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/15/two-men-beheaded-in-videos-from-nagorno-karabakh-war-identified>)

2. Major General Hikmat Hasanov (Hikmet Hesenov)

Born in 1975 in Fuzuli district, Hasanov is the Commander of the 1st Army Corps of Azerbaijan (<https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-makes-strategic-advances-along-karabakhs-northern-southern-flanks/>), which covered the northern frontline of the Artsakh conflict. Military personnel under Hasanov's command engaged in war crimes in the 2016 and 2020 conflicts. Following the 2016 conflict, Hasanov also oversaw a crackdown (<https://armenian.usc.edu/allegations-of-armenian-spies-in-azerbaijan-has-dark-follow-up/>) inside his corps seeking to find "Armenian agents" and allegedly targeting gay service members (https://twitter.com/emil_sanamyan/status/9403131107097600). In the process, at least eight died (<https://armenian.usc.edu/allegations-of-armenian-spies-in-azerbaijan-has-dark-follow-up/>) under torture.

Sources and additional reading: Jamestown Institute (<https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-makes-strategic-advances-along-karabakhs-northern-southern-flanks/>); AzVision (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://azvision.az/news/232327/madagizi-igaldan-azad-eden-general-hikmet-hesenov-kimdir-dosye-.html>) (translated); USC Institute of Armenian Studies (<https://armenian.usc.edu/allegations-of-armenian-spies-in-azerbaijan-has-dark-follow-up/>); Emil Sanamyan on Twitter (https://twitter.com/emil_sanamyan/status/9403131107097600)

3. Major General Mais Barkhudarov

Born in 1976 in Qubadli district, Barkhudarov is the Commander of the 2nd Army Corps of Azerbaijan (<https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-makes-strategic-advances-along-karabakhs-northern-southern-flanks/>), which covered the southern frontline in the Artsakh conflict. Like Hasanov, military personnel under Barkhudarov's command engaged in war crimes (<https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785>), both in the 2016 and 2020 conflicts. In 2020, his 2nd Corps committed atrocities (<https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785>) against the civilian population of southern Artsakh.

Sources and additional reading: Jamestown Institute (<https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-makes-strategic-advances-along-karabakhs-northern-southern-flanks/>); Press Service of the President of Azerbaijan (<https://en.president.az/articles/41714>); Azxeber (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://azxeber.com/az/dusmeni-qorxuya-salan-general-mayor-mais-bexudarov-kimdir-siyaset/>) (translated); Artsakh Ombudsman (<https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785>)

4. Major General Zaur Sabir oglu Memmedov

Born (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://heydaraliyev-centers.az/aghjabadi/news/13708>) in Agjabedi district, Memmedov is deputy head of Azerbaijan's special forces command and is credited with the capture of parts of southern Artsakh (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://heydaraliyev-centers.az/aghjabadi/news/13708>), including Shushi. During the occupation of Shushi, Memmedov's special forces committed numerous human rights abuses, including taking hostages, killing civilians (<https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785>), and vandalizing Ghazanchetsots Cathedral (<https://asbarez.com/198472/as-ghazanchetsots-is-vandalized-by-azeris-an-urgent-call-to-unesco-to-protect-artsakh-religious-sites/>). In the village of Karintak, just outside of Shushi, Memmedov's forces kidnapped, tortured, and murdered 58-year-old Alvard Tovmasyan (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://hetq.am/hy/article/126270>), a woman with mental disabilities. In all, at least 33 Armenian civilians have been confirmed (<https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785>) to have been executed by Azerbaijani forces in southern Artsakh, including the above beheadings by special forces.

Sources and additional reading: Heydar Aliyev Centers (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://heydaraliyev-centers.az/aghjabadi/news/13708>) (translated; for personal info); Artsakh Ombudsman (<https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785>); Asbarez (<https://asbarez.com/198472/as-ghazanchetsots-is-vandalized-by-azeris-an-urgent-call-to-unesco-to-protect-artsakh-religious-sites/>); HETQ (<https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://hetq.am/hy/article/126270>) (translated); Persecution (<https://www.persecution.org/2021/01/16/missing-nagorno-karabakh-woman-found-dead-tortured/>)

5. Colonel Tehran Mensimov

Born in 1972, in Qusar (<https://archive.is/nPGuJ>) district, Mensimov is the commander of the Nakhichevan Army's Special Forces (<https://k7jkw307upotqhmhd5x3y7npgi--web-archive-org.translate.goog/web/20210130225242/http://www.serqqapisi.az/index.php/idztimai-siaysi/29445-nakhdzh-vandan-shushaya-uzanan-zhaelaebae-yolu.html>), which are credited with a leading role in the 2020 conflict, in particular the fighting around and in Shushi (<https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1341263773538136069>). As a result, Mensimov is culpable for the same crimes as Memmedov, such as Alvard Tovmasyan's murder, cultural vandalism, kidnapping, and others (see above). Allegedly, he personally shot at (<https://twitter.com/artsakheng/status/1341990035172675590>) an Artsakh citizen when they refused to come out of their house. Furthermore, on October 28, his troops kidnapped (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/12/survivors->

unlawful-detention-nagorno-karabakh-speak-out-about-war-crimes)multiple Armenian civilians in Avetaranots, including 72-year-old Arega Shahkeldyan and her husband, Eduard. The latter died in captivity "under unclear circumstances (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/12/survivors-unlawful-detention-nagorno-karabakh-speak-out-about-war-crimes>)".

Sources and additional reading: Turan News Agency (<https://archive.is/nPGuJ>); East Gate (<https://k7jkw307upotqhmhd5x3y7npgi--web-archive-org.translate.google.com/web/20210130225242/http://www.serqqapisi.az/index.php/idztimari-siaysi/29445-nakhdzh-vandan-shushaya-uzanan-zhaelaebae-yolu.html>); Rob Lee on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/RALee85/status/1341263773538136069>); Republic of Artsakh on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/artsakheng/status/1341990035172675590>); Human Rights Watch (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/12/survivors-unlawful-detention-nagorno-karabakh-speak-out-about-war-crimes>)

6. Lower-Ranking Azerbaijani Naval Special Forces Officers

The following list includes officers of the Azerbaijani Naval Special Forces (NSF), which were responsible for war crimes against civilians and military personnel, including capture of hostages (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54645254>), torture (<https://www.persecution.org/2021/01/16/missing-nagorno-karabakh-woman-found-dead-tortured/>), executions (<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2020/10/15/an-execution-in-hadrut-karabakh/>), dismemberment of bodies (<https://www.persecution.org/2021/01/16/missing-nagorno-karabakh-woman-found-dead-tortured/>), and decapitations (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/armenia-azerbaijan-decapitation-and-war-crimes-in-gruesome-videos-must-be-urgently-investigated/>). Another concrete example of their brutality is their kidnapping (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/12/survivors-unlawful-detention-nagorno-karabakh-speak-out-about-war-crimes>)of 71-year-old Sasha Gharakhanyan and his 44-year-old son Arsen. They were both held in captivity for weeks (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/12/survivors-unlawful-detention-nagorno-karabakh-speak-out-about-war-crimes>); Sasha was eventually released, but Arsen appeared in degrading Azerbaijani propaganda videos and was subsequently shot and killed. Neither were combatants. The NSF is easily identifiable by its distinct pattern camouflage (<https://twitter.com/razminfo/status/1318998872534953984?s=21>) uniform.

Many of the officers on the list were awarded medals for the brutal captures of Shushi and/or Hadrut, which implicated them in the above war crimes. For a full list of those awarded medals, see here (<https://president.az/articles/49221/print>)and here (<https://azeridefence.com/prezident-silahli-quvv%C9%99l%C9%99rin-h%C9%99rbi-qulluqularini-c%C9%99sur-doyuscu-medali-il%C9%99-t%C9%99ltif-edib/>); for documentation about what those medals mean, see here (<https://armenian.usc.edu/azerbajians-war-hero-awards-and-their-likely-meaning/>).

- a. Captain 1st Rank *Zaur Guliyev (Zaur Hikmət oğlu Quliyev)*, commander of the well-trained and versatile 641st unit (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090729182202/http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=26294>) of the NSF, and awarded "Hero of the Patriotic War" for his fighting in Hadrut (war crimes listed above).
- b. Captain 2nd Rank *Orhan Gasimov (Qasimov Orxan Yusif oğlu)*, awarded for his role in the capture of Shushi (war crimes also above).
- c. Captain 2nd Rank *Shafiq Sultanov (Sultanov Şəfi İlyas oğlu)*, awarded for his role in the capture of Hadrut.
- d. Captain 3rd Rank *Farhad İsmayilov (İsmayilov Fərhad Xudaverdi oğlu)*, awarded for his role in the capture of Hadrut.
- e. Captain 3rd Rank *İlqar Nurmamedov (Nurməmmədov İlqar Əlfəddin oğlu)*, awarded for his role in the capture of Hadrut.
- f. Captain 3rd Rank *Eldar Panahov (Pənahov Eldar Aydın oğlu)*, awarded for his role in the capture of Hadrut.
- g. Captain 3rd Rank *Babək Şirinov (Şirinov Babək Mərdan oğlu)*, awarded for his role in the capture of Hadrut.

For naval-to-ground-force rank conversion, see here (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_ranks_of_Azerbaijan).

Sources and additional information: Bellingcat (<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2020/10/15/an-execution-in-hadrut-karabakh/>); BBC (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54645254>); Razm.info on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/razminfo/status/1318998872534953984?s=21>); Amnesty (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/armenia-azerbaijan-decapitation-and-war-crimes-in-gruesome-videos-must-be-urgently-investigated/>); Persecution (<https://www.persecution.org/2021/01/16/missing-nagorno-karabakh-woman-found-dead-tortured/>); President.AZ (<https://president.az/articles/49221/print>); AzeriDefense (<https://azeridefence.com/prezident-silahli-quvv%C9%99l%C9%99rin-h%C9%99rbi-qulluqularini-c%C9%99sur-doyuscu-medali-il%C9%99-t%C9%99ltif-edib/>); USC-IAS (<https://armenian.usc.edu/azerbajians-war-hero-awards-and-their-likely-meaning/>); DefenseLink (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090729182202/http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=26294>)(archived); Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_ranks_of_Azerbaijan) (sourced from here (<https://mod.gov.az/images/pdf/854d34d118da32783a51172925270d7.pdf>)); Human Rights Watch (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/12/survivors-unlawful-detention-nagorno-karabakh-speak-out-about-war-crimes>)