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Afghan Civil Society Talks to EU About Role in Peace Negotiations

The Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace (AMIP) facilitated a virtual meeting between the European Parliament and Afghan civil society on their role in the ongoing peace negotiations on Oct. 29. "There is a need to bring all Afghan voices to the negotiating table but also seek societal consensus for compromise," said head of the European Union (EU) Delegation to Afghanistan, Andreas von Brandt.

Afghan civil society called on the EU and its member states to encourage the Afghan parties to "fully implement a comprehensive, nationwide and unconditional ceasefire."

Afghan civil society members included Palwasha Hasan, founding member of Afghan Women's Network, Hekmatullah Azami, deputy director of the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies and several others. They spoke ...

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Atmar Discusses Challenges of Ongoing Peace Talks with U.S. Ambassador

Acting Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar met Ambassador Ross Wilson, Charge d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul on Saturday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said.

Atmar thanked the U.S. for its commitment and cooperation to the Afghan people and government for 19 years, specifically their support of the peace talks.

They discussed the challenges of the ongoing peace talks, the importance of regional and international support for the success of this process, and the preservation and strengthening of bilateral cooperation between Kabul and Washington.

Atmar called the continued support of the U.S. to the people and government of Afghanistan important for achieving sustainable peace and stability.

Rights Groups Urge Australia to Release Inquiry into War Crimes in Afghanistan



Twenty-five leading Afghan and Australian human rights organizations have published an open letter today urging the Australian government to make public a long-awaited inquiry by the Inspector-General of the Australian Defense Force into alleged war

crimes committed by Australian special forces in Afghanistan. The inquiry, four years in the making, comes amid a volley of investigations by Australian media outlets into the alleged war crimes and the "culture of impunity" that enables such violations.

To date, investigations mainly by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and The Age newspaper in Melbourne have found that dozens of unarmed alleged Taliban fighters, as well as civilians, including children, have been killed by Australian forces in

the last decade.

The Afghan Files, published in 2017, laid much of the foundation for subsequent reporting. The Afghan Files, made up of hundreds of pages of secret defense force documents leaked to the ABC, detailed a "culture of impunity," in which Australian soldiers killed Afghan civilians and severed the hands of Taliban fighters killed in action.

Just last week the ABC reported that an Australian special forces soldier made a "deliberate decision to break the rules of war" by executing a prisoner after being told that there wasn't enough room on a U.S. aircraft for all seven of them.

"The pilot said, 'That's too many people, we can't carry that many passengers.' And you just heard this silence and then we heard a pop. And then they said, 'Ok, we have six prisoners,'" a U.S. marine present at the time said.

Earlier this year, the ABC obtained footage from a helmet camera that showed an Australia Special Air Service (SAS) operator chase down and "execute" an unarmed Afghan civilian as he lay on his back in a field. ...

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Kabul University to Host Iran-Afghanistan Joint Book Fair

The third joint book exhibition of Iran and Afghanistan will be inaugurated by First Vice President Amrullah Saleh at Kabul University on Monday.

The exhibition will be held from Nov. 2-12 with at least 40 Iranian and 40 Afghan publishers taking part.

The exhibition will be held in cooperation with the ministries of Intelligence and Culture of Afghanistan and the Iranian Centre for International Cultural Studies of Islamic Culture and Relations Organisations.

Programmes including an evening of poetry and specialised tutorial workshops while fully observing the COVID-19 relevant health protocols.



Senate wants US to standby Afghans as per BSA

The Senate has called on the United States to stand by the Afghans in accordance with their bilateral strategic and security agreement to establish lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Taliban attacks in various parts of the country have intensified since the start of intra-Afghan talks, the statement from the Senate released on Sunday said.

It stressed that there were high hopes for peace among the Afghan people, but the agreement did not stop the war and bring stability to the country.

The senators called on the government to use active diplomacy and persuade the U.S. to continue supporting the country, in line with the decisions by Washington.

The Senate also asked the government to form a regional and international consensus mediated by the Organization of Islamic



Cooperation (OIC), the United Nations and the United Nations Security Council to achieve peace and conclude the intra-Afghan peace talks.

"With a regional and international consensus, the peace process would be fruitful, and Afghanistan would be free from global terrorism," the Senate statement said.

They also expressed concern about the destruction of U.S. military facilities and the movement for military equipment to Pakistan before the destruction of the bases in Afghanistan.

The senators proposed to speak to U.S. officials to garner more support and to get military facilities and weapons for Afghan security forces.

Afghan Civil...

with Petras Auštrevičius, the EU Parliament's chair of the Delegation for Relations with Afghanistan, and Ambassador Von Brandt.

They also asked the EU to continue their commitment and active support to an inclusive Afghan peace process that preserves and builds on the political, social and economic accomplishments of the citizens of Afghanistan.

Civil society members urged to maintain their support for stability and development in Afghanistan.

Azeri leader...

The ethnic Armenian-controlled Nagorno-Karabakh military said that missiles been targeted at the town of Martuni, the village of Karin Tak and the city of Shushi, just 15 kilometres (9 miles) from the enclave's largest city, Stepanakert.

Armenia's defence ministry said a second militant from Syria had been captured on the battlefield. Azerbaijan has previously denied the presence of foreign fighters.

Azerbaijan's defence ministry said its army units in Tovuz, Gadabay and Gubadli had come under shelling overnight. Combat on Sunday was concentrated in Aghdere, Aghdam, Gubadli and Khojavend - the Azeri name for Martuni.

Nagorno-Karabakh's army says 1,166 of its soldiers have been killed since Sept. 27 and the office of Nagorno-Karabakh's human rights ombudsman said the civilian death toll was 45.

Azerbaijan, which does not disclose its military casualties, says 91 civilians have been killed. Russia has estimated as many as 5,000 deaths on both sides.

By Asfandyar Mir

What will America's commitment to Afghanistan look like after the election?

Although we did not hear about the war in Afghanistan during the presidential debates, the presidential election is a big moment for Afghanistan. Despite the U.S.-Taliban deal to end America's longest war, signed in Doha, Qatar, in February, conflict in Afghanistan hasn't receded.

Recent attacks by Taliban fighters across the country appear aimed at pressuring the U.S. and Afghan governments. And the Islamic State claimed responsibility for a violent attack on a Kabul tutoring center last weekend that killed 24 people, mainly students.

What will America's commitment to Afghanistan look like after the election? That's what Afghans are trying to figure out. Some such as President Ashraf Ghani may be hoping that a Joe Biden presidency would reset the peace process, scrap parts of February's Doha deal and renew assurance of U.S. support. For now, President Trump appears determined to expedite the timetable and bring all U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan "home by Christmas," a tweet announcement that took his own administration by surprise.

Peace negotiations are in flux. The intra-Afghan peace negotiation — which was supposed to start in March — was delayed as the Taliban and the Afghan government disagreed over unilateral U.S. commitments to the Taliban, such as the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners. Following push and pull on the release of prisoners, Afghan politicians and the Taliban started negotiating directly in September. But since then, the talks remain stalled over foundational principles.

For one, the Taliban insists on making the Doha deal with the United States — which did not include the Afghan government — the basis of the dialogue. But some Afghan negotiators don't want to ratify American commitments to the Taliban, which they believe undercut the Afghan government's legitimacy. The lack of progress in negotiations is complicated by the Taliban's broader behavior. Instead of becoming more conciliatory, the Taliban has ramped up operations across the country, sending ominous signals that it is preparing for more combat as U.S. forces withdraw. Recently, it launched an offensive in southern Afghanistan.

In addition, the Taliban is threatening to kill those who collaborated with the United States "as long as they do not repent and accept an Islamic system."



This also appears to be a bid to induce defections from Afghan security forces.

The Afghan government's negotiating power, meanwhile, is undermined by divisions among key elites. The rivalry between Ghani and lead Afghan negotiator Abdullah Abdullah looms large — a division the Taliban will look to exploit. A major sticking point is the proposal of an interim government to oversee the peace process. Although some elites are open to the idea, Ghani remains opposed, because it would probably leave him out of power.

The violence since the February peace agreement has taken a toll on Afghan civilians

The U.S.-Taliban pact has failed to lower the toll of the war on Afghan civilians. The U.N. assistance mission in Afghanistan estimates that the war has killed 2,117 civilians in the first nine months of 2020. While much of the harm has resulted from actions of the Taliban, analysts suspect the Islamic State is brutally targeting vulnerable minorities, including children. The Afghan military continues to harm civilians, too.

The high levels of violence have disappointed many Afghans who hoped that the Doha deal would ease their misery. Since Trump's signaling of an expedited U.S. force withdrawal, some Afghans question the viability of peace talks — and whether the Taliban genuinely wants a deal.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the American peace envoy for Afghanistan, recently tweeted that the Taliban has ramped up violence inside Afghanistan to extract maximum concessions during the peace process. Other analysts worry that the Taliban is systematically

hollowing out all sources of future political and military challenge following the U.S. drawdown.

The Taliban's ties with al-Qaeda are another point of contention

As part of the Doha deal, the Taliban committed to not let al-Qaeda use Afghan territory against the United States. Some reporting even suggests that in the secret annex to the deal, the Taliban agreed to renounce al-Qaeda.

But since February, the Taliban has taken no publicly discernible steps against al-Qaeda. In a recent report for the Middle East Institute, I argue that there is a firm political basis for the relationship: Both groups fit into each other's ideology-based political projects, so the Taliban is unlikely to crack down against al-Qaeda.

In mid-October, Afghan forces killed a senior, most-wanted al-Qaeda leader in a Taliban-controlled area. If he was under the protection of a Taliban leader, as some reports suggest, that would potentially violate the U.S.-Taliban deal. But Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and senior U.S. intelligence officials are deflecting questions on the Taliban's ties with al-Qaeda.

Regional rivalries are undermining peace. Amid the uncertainty due to the presidential election, Khalilzad is struggling to constrain the influence of regional countries on Afghanistan. Pakistan's role in the current stage, for instance, remains unclear. In his 15th visit to Islamabad, Khalilzad leaned on Pakistan's army chief Qamar Bajwa to persuade allied Taliban to show flexibility on a cease-fire. Bajwa reportedly pledged to send his intelligence ... **P3**

By Global Village Space

Has Pakistan's Policy towards Afghanistan Changed

The peace process in Afghanistan is heading towards an interesting phase. The US has signed its deal with Taliban and now intra afghan talks are under way. Several regional and international stakeholders are looking forward to playing their role in ending the 18 years long war in Afghanistan. Like others, Pakistan has its significant role to play in the process, and it is looking well committed to play it.

Who was Pakistan supporting before?

In the past, Pakistan has never supported Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and other leaders like him in Afghanistan. Pakistan's focus was always either Taliban or Gulbaddin Hekmatyar. On the contrary, most leaders from northern alliance were inclined towards India and Iran. For instance, at a time when Ahmad shah Masood along with Abdullah Abdullah captured Kabul, they strengthened its ties with India and Iran. At that time Pakistan

backed Gulbaddin Hikmatyar and his ally Rashid Dustam for overthrowing Ahmad Shah Masood.

Similarly, if we look at the situation through the lenses of politics, Pakistan supported Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani, in general elections respectively against Abdullah Abdullah. But recently a shift is witnessed in the approach of Pakistan towards Afghanistan, referring to when it invited Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah visited Pakistan after a long time, and was not only warmly welcomed, but he also met political and military leadership of the host country. Moreover, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar also came here to meet the official and discuss the very peace process. Earlier a high-level delegation of Taliban also visited Pakistan, which discussed peace process with Pakistan's officials. There are several reasons for Pakistan's changing approach

of engaging other stakeholders along with Taliban in the peace process.

Policy shift by Pakistan After the retreat of Taliban, India has used the soil of Afghanistan against Pakistan constantly. Instability in Afghanistan played an important role in bringing unrest and insurgency in previous FATA and KPK. This is why Pakistan has realized the sensitivity of situations and is trying to engage maximum people in the peace process. Through these efforts, Pakistan wants a clear and distinct solution to the decades long war in Afghanistan.

In this regard, Abdullah Abdullah visited Pakistan, and in the future it is expected that Pakistan would invite other stakeholders like Hamid Karzai and Rashid Dustam. The aims are to take all main actors on board for successful peace talks. Pakistan wants a peaceful and stable Afghanistan, ... **P3**

Taliban Suffer Heavy Casualties in Kandahar, 101 Militants Killed



At least 101 Taliban members were killed in attacks by government forces in Arghandab and Zhari districts of Kandahar, security officials said on Sunday.

Airstrikes and ground attacks were carried out by government forces in the past 24 hours in the villages of Kohk and Neghan in Arghandab district and Nahr Kariz village in Zharidistrict, Jamal Nasser Barakzai, spokesperson for the Kandahar Police told Reportedly. In Arghandab, 64 Taliban fighters were killed

and the remaining 37 were killed in Zhari. Barakzai added that 26 more members of the group were wounded during the attacks.

Taliban members had fallen in clashes with Afghan security forces and taken refuge in civilian homes. According to official accounts, civilians were not allowed to leave their homes in certain area due to the conflict.

The Taliban have not yet commented on the attacks.

Arghandiwal Vows Reshuffle in Finance Ministry

Acting Minister of Finance Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal on Saturday said all posts that were previously occupied by individuals who were appointed based on relations will be re-announced soon.

He said that systematic reforms will be implemented in the Ministry of Finance to ensure that all incomes are transferred to the state treasury. Arghandiwal said that the move will also ensure funding of ordinary budget from national revenue.

"If we come up with proper management, we will not have any problem in terms of completing our ordinary budget because we have the ability to fund the ordinary budget from our domestic resources," said Arghandiwal, who addressed a ceremony on the start of registration of undocumented vehicles.

According to Ministry of Finance, over the past ten years, 46,000 vehicles were imported in the



country legally and the rest came through illegal ways.

"They should consult us and fill the forms and submit them to the customs. The second stage of this process is the inclusion of data of these vehicles to the customs," said Mohammad Khalil Salehzada, the head of Customs Department of Ministry of Finance.

The purpose of this process is to increase national revenues, ensure security and public order, and prevent traffic disruptions.

"Today it is a good step that in order to prevent illegal activities, we have started the process of registering vehicles that are not registered in customs and has no traffic documents," Arghandiwal said.

The registration of undocumented vehicles will start from today and the process will continue until 17 November.

"If there is transparency, the private sector will not be compelled to pay bribes or process their business through illegal ways," said Sherbaz Kaminzada, member of Afghanistan Chambers Federation.

Rights Groups Urge...

Former defense chief Admiral Chris Barrie told the ABC that he was shocked by the footage.

"The man was not armed, the man was in a docile situation, and he was shot," Barrie said. "Now, in a situation where you have armed forces which are carrying out tasks, in another place, under appropriate rules of engagement and the laws of armed conflict, this is a war crime."

The Australian Defense Force investigated the incident but ruled that the killing was justified, stating it was in self-defense. The special service soldier found to have cut the hands off dead Taliban fighters was also cleared.

In another incident, the ABC reported a "mass shooting" in which Australian special forces killed up to 10 unarmed Afghan civilians during a 2012 raid. The Australian Department of Defense, NATO, and others have been accused of covering up or not reporting incidents.

In 2010, a crowd of around 600 Afghan demonstrators threw rocks at an Australian base in Uruzgan province. At the time, NATO reported that one protester was killed when he "aimed an AK-47" at troops inside the base, but a report by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission found that five civilians had been killed and six others wounded.

Reports have also emerged of Australian forces allegedly planting weapons on the bodies of Afghan civilians. In one incident, the ABC found that the same AK-47 assault rifle was planted on two different bodies. Australian troops largely withdrew from Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007. A small task force consisting of Australia's special forces remained, mostly to train Afghan troops but also to assist Afghan special forces on Taliban raids.

Has Pakistan's...

because the prosperity of Pakistan is linked with stable Afghanistan to a great extent.

The real reason behind US-Taliban peace talks

Moreover, the deal of US and Taliban seems more of a political stunt by US rather than a sincere effort at peace. President Donald Trump did it because of the upcoming presidential elections in November. US probably doesn't want complete peace in a country which is on the doorsteps of powers which have a rivalry with the US.

Central Asian states are of tremendous importance to China due to their mineral rich attributes, and the only short and effective path to these

states is through Afghanistan. China and the US are already engaged in a trade war, therefore US probably wants a constant threat to China as well as Russia in the shape of Afghanistan.

Peace in Afghanistan will be beneficial for Pakistan

From Pakistan's perspective, success of CPEC and economic prosperity of Pakistan is highly dependent on stability in Afghanistan. Therefore, Pakistan has adopted a proactive policy of taking all parties in confidence and is eager to bring peace in Afghanistan. The economic aims of CPEC can be fully effective only when Afghanistan is free of any violence, so that Pakistan and China can fully utilize it to fulfill their economic ambitions.

Unlike previous instances, Pakistan has changed its approach towards Afghanistan and Taliban. It is now taking all main stakeholders in confidence, not only because of its decreasing influence on Taliban but to ensure lasting peace in the country as well. The decreased influence on Taliban is due to a smart approach taken by Taliban. Taliban has become a global actor, it is engaging with various regional powers like Russia, China and Iran. Along with Pakistan, it must look out for their own states interests as well. Hence, Pakistan has realized the situation and is not only engaging Taliban but also taking other stakeholders in confidence as well to ensure peace in Afghanistan.

What will America's...

chief to Qatar to persuade the Taliban to agree to a cease-fire. But Pakistan's public pronouncements fall short of urging the Taliban to cease its operations — and warn against archrival India's influence in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, India isn't happy that the Doha agreement paves the way for Pakistan-allied Taliban to

regain power in Afghanistan. To counter the rise of a Pakistan-leaning government in Kabul, Delhi wants to aid Afghan militia leaders who may be willing to fight the Taliban after a U.S. drawdown. Other regional players, such as Iran, Russia and China, are also sending signals that undermine the ongoing peace process. Khalilzad has reiterated the risk that rivalries

in the Gulf and South Asia could fuel a new cycle of war in Afghanistan. Senior Afghan officials suggest that they want peace but are anticipating a civil war.

For now, the peace process is not a priority for many inside and outside Afghanistan — and the prospects of peace may be tied to the Afghan policy of whoever is in office in the White House in January.

Large-scale...

What do you think of this? If there are unrests, how will the US political and security structure respond and react to it? This year, the likelihood of large scale protests and possibly some violence is more than any of previous years. This reflects the deepening of many divisions, economic, culture, and racial in the US. Therefore, most likely should their candidate lose, both Democrats and Republican supporters of Trump would contest the result. The Federal and state governments are preparing for such contingencies. The National Guard is preparing for all eventualities. Will the result of the US election affect its foreign policy particularly towards the

Middle East and Iran?

US policy in the Persian Gulf is also unlikely to change much. America's basic positions regarding Iran would not change too. In many areas, the US foreign policy under a Biden Presidency would not change much. For example, Biden would continue a rough approach towards Russia and China. But he will strengthen US ties with its European and Asian allies. Regarding the Middle East, Biden, too, will continue American support for Israel regime and will encourage reconciliation between Israel regime and Arab states. However, a Biden administration might do a bit more to encourage an acceptable peace between Israel regime and the Palestinians.

US policy in the Persian Gulf is also unlikely to change much, although Biden would not give unconditional support to Bin Salman's regional adventures. Regarding Iran, too, America's basic positions would not change. A significant improvement in US-Iran relations would require a change in some aspects of Iran's foreign policy. Nor there would be a quick end to sanctions. Biden would want a tougher agreement on the nuclear issue and also concessions from Iran on its missile program and regional activities. However, Biden administration's tone is likely to be more diplomatic. This change in tone could make it easier for Iran to talk to the Biden administration.

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Large-scale protests after U.S. election possible: Hunter

Stating that the likelihood of large scale protests after US election is more than any of previous years, Shireen Hunter said that it reflects the deepening of many divisions, economic, culture, and racial in the US.

As the 2020 US election campaign draws to a close, voters are both more enthusiastic than in previous years and more worried about the outcome of the election and whether their candidate will not win.

Recent polls suggest Joe Biden is likely to win, but Trump's behavior and rhetoric show that he will not simply intend to step down if he fails. The issue of the possibility of a civil war in the United States if Trump loses the presidential election has become more serious than before.

On the other hand, 2020 US Presidential Election has also challenged Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the field of foreign policy issues, including the

US policy towards the West Asia (Middle East).

To know more about the US Presidential Election and the effects of its result on US policies, we reached out to Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter Professor of Political Science at Georgetown University in the US.

How do you see the role of electoral votes in determining Biden or Trump's fate in election? In general, in US presidential elections it is the electoral votes that determine the result. The candidate that wins the majority of electoral college votes is the winner. To win, a candidate needs to obtain 270 electoral votes. Without that, even if a candidate is ahead in popular vote, he /she would lose. So even if Biden obtains more popular votes but Trump gets 270 electoral votes, he would be the winner.

There are reports about possible unrest in the US after the election. ...

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A look at the world

New Zealand's Ardern forms government with Greens

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's Labour Party on Sunday signed an agreement with the Green Party to form government in the Pacific nation of nearly five million.

Ardern earlier this month delivered the biggest election victory for her centre-left Labour Party in half a century. Although she no longer needs support from other parties to govern, coalitions are the norm



in New Zealand as parties look to build consensus.

On Saturday, Ardern said her new government would be announced on Monday, offering the Greens two ministerial portfolios, but also included enhanced provisions that allow the coalition partner more freedom.

"What's unique here is that we're both agreeing that we actually don't have to agree," Ardern told reporters in televised remarks at the signing ceremony on Sunday.

The Greens are obliged to back the government over decisions made in their portfolios but are otherwise entitled to take a different position to Labour.

"I'm again really proud that we have a good mandate, because it shows that this is a cooperation agreement that is a win-win for the Greens," the Green Party's co-leader Marama Davidson said.

Prior to the October election, the Labour Party was in a governing coalition also with the Greens and New Zealand First.

Mexico protesters burn Trump effigy, slam U.S. border policy



Protesters in Mexico burned effigies of Donald Trump and a border patrol agent on the U.S. border on Saturday, condemning President Donald Trump's migration policies and urging Americans to reject him at the ballot box on Tuesday. A few dozen migrant activists marched to the beach fence separating Mexico from the United States at the border city of Tijuana chanting, "Trump, we won't pay for your wall," then set fire to a crude, besuited effigy of the president on a stick. "We're calling on people to vote against Trump and in favor of hope. Biden has promised us a humanitarian migration reform, we'll be watching to ensure the promises are kept this time," said Hugo Castro, a Mexican-American migrant activist.

Trump, a Republican, is battling Democratic opponent Joe Biden, seeking re-election as president four years after he won office pledging to stop illegal immigration from Mexico, which he has accused of sending rapists and murderers north.

Insisting Mexico will pay for the border wall he is building between the two countries, Trump has pushed and threatened President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador into tightening up Mexico's borders against migrants from Central America.

Alongside the Trump effigy, the demonstrators torched a pinata of a border patrol agent, a week after a Mexican man was killed in an altercation with U.S. officials attempting to cross into the United States on the Tijuana-San Diego border.

Azeri leader says he will fight 'to the end' if Karabakh talks fail

Azeri President Ilham Aliyev said on Sunday his troops would "go to the end" should negotiations fail to result in an agreement by ethnic Armenian forces to withdraw from Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding regions.

Aliyev, speaking during a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in the Azeri capital Baku, also said Armenia had "no basis" to request Russian military assistance in the conflict.

Further shelling was reported by Azerbaijan and ethnic Armenian forces in and around Nagorno-Karabakh on Sunday. The death toll in the region's worst fighting in more than 25 years has already surpassed 1,000 and is possibly much higher.



Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but is populated and controlled by ethnic Armenians.

The conflict has brought into sharp focus the increased influence of Turkey, an ally of Azerbaijan, in a former Soviet region considered by Russia to be within its sphere of influence. Russia also has a security alliance with Armenia.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has asked Russia to outline the extent of the support it could expect from Moscow.

In response, Russia's foreign ministry said on Saturday it would provide "all assistance required" should the conflict spill onto "the territory of Armenia" - land that is outside the current conflict zone.

Aliyev, quoted by state news agency Azertag, said he wanted to resolve the conflict through negotiations that would result in the withdrawal of ethnic Armenian forces.

"Otherwise," he said, "we will continue by any means to restore our territorial integrity and ... we will go to the end." Azerbaijan's advances on the battlefield since fighting began on Sept. 27 have reduced its incentive to strike a lasting peace deal and complicated international efforts to broker a truce. Three ceasefires have failed to hold. ...

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