


UDC: 94(479.24)

LBC: 63.3(2)6-6; 63.3 (2)64; 63.3(5 e)64

MJ № 438

 10.33864/2617-751X.2026.v9.i1.234-245

## NUMERAL DYNAMICS AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION OF KARABAKH REGION (1900–1920S)

**Elshan Aslanov\***

**Abstract.** The article examines the dynamics and ethnic composition of the population of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is known that since the 20s of the XIX century, Armenians, victims of the imperialist policy of the Russian Empire, put forward claims to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and claim to be local residents of the region. In this regard, it is very important and relevant to turn to historical facts and reveal the true facts in the article. The article proves on the basis of statistical data that the policy of resettlement of Armenians pursued by the Russian Empire after 1828 had a significant impact on the ethnic composition of Karabakh. A comparative analysis conducted on the basis of the first All-Russian census of 1897 and the data of the "Caucasian calendar" for 1903, 1914, 1915 and 1917 shows that the number of Armenian population in Shusha and Zangezur districts is growing rapidly, and the Azerbaijani Turks are losing relative superiority. In this case, by determining when the population came to the region, their numbers and ethnic composition, we also reveal the political motives of the Armenians' claims to the region. The article refers to sources compiled during the Russian Empire, the collection of laws of the Russian Empire, as well as information from historical literature.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, Karabakh, Zangezur, Shusha, Jabrayil, Javanshir, population, ethnic composition

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**To cite this article:** Aslanov, E. [2026]. NUMERAL DYNAMICS AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION OF KARABAKH REGION (1900–1920S). *"Metafizika" journal*, 9(1), pp.234-245.  
<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2026.v9.i1.234-245>

**Article history:**

**Received:** 25.12.2025 **Revised:** 09.01.2026 **Accepted:** 02.02.2026 **Published:** 15.03.2026




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## ДИНАМИКА ЧИСЛЕННОСТИ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ И ЭТНИЧЕСКИЙ СОСТАВ КАРАБАХСКОГО РЕГИОНА (1900–1920-Е ГГ.)

Эльшан Асланов\*

**Абстракт.** В статье рассматривается динамика численности и этнический состав населения Карабахского региона Азербайджана в начале XX века. Известно, что с 1920-х годов армяне, ставшие жертвами империалистической политики Российской империи, предъявляли претензии на Карабахский регион Азербайджана и утверждали, что являются его коренными жителями. В связи с этим очень важно и актуально обратиться к историческим фактам и раскрыть реальные факты в статье. В статье на основе статистических данных доказываем, что проводимая Российской империей после 1828 года политика переселения армян оказала значительное влияние на этнический состав Карабаха. Сравнительный анализ, проведенный на основе данных первой Всероссийской переписи населения 1897 года и "Кавказского календаря" за 1903, 1914, 1915 и 1917 годы, показывает, что численность армянского населения в Шушинском и Зангезурском районах стремительно растет, а азербайджанские турки теряют свое относительное превосходство. В таком случае, определяя время прибытия населения в регион, его численность и этнический состав, мы выявляем и политические мотивы притязаний армян на регион. В статье даны ссылки на источники, составленные в период Российской империи, свод законов Российской империи, а также сведения из исторической литературы.

**Ключевые слова:** Азербайджан, Карабах, Зангезур, Шуша, Джебраил, Джаваншир, население, этнический состав

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**Цитировать статью:** Асланов, Э. [2026]. ДИНАМИКА ЧИСЛЕННОСТИ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ И ЭТНИЧЕСКИЙ СОСТАВ КАРАБАХСКОГО РЕГИОНА (1900–1920-Е ГГ.). Журнал «Metafizika», 9(1), с.234-245.

<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2026.v9.i1.234-245>

**История статьи:**

Поступила: 25.12.2025 Переработана: 09.01.2026 Принята: 02.02.2026 Опубликовано: 15.03.2026



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UOT: 94(479.24)

KBT: 63.3(2)6-6; 63.3 (2)64; 63.3(5 e)64

MJ № 438

 10.33864/2617-751X.2026.v9.i1.234-245

## QARABAĞ BÖLGƏSİNİN ƏHALİSİNİN SAY DİNAMİKASI VƏ ETNİK TƏRKİBİ (1900-1920-Cİ İLLƏR)

Elşən Aslanov\*

**Abstrakt.** Bəhs olunan məqalədə XX əsrin əvvəllərində Azərbaycanın Qarabağ bölgəsinin əhalisinin say dinamikası və etnik tərkibi araşdırılır. Məlumdur ki, XIX əsrin 20-ci illərindən etibarən Rusiya imperiyasının imperialist siyasətinin qurbanı olan ermənilər Azərbaycanın Qarabağ bölgəsinə iddialar irəli sürür, bölgənin yerli sakinləri olduğunu iddia edirlər. Bu baxımdan bəhs olunan məqalədə tarixi faktlara müraciət edilməsi, əsl həqiqətlərin üzə çıxarılması olduqca vacib və aktualıq kəsb edir. Məqalədə Rusiya imperiyasının 1828-ci ildən sonra həyata keçirdiyi ermənilərin köçürülməsi siyasətinin Qarabağın etnik tərkibinə ciddi təsir göstərdiyi statistik məlumatlar əsasında sübut edilir. 1897-ci il Birinci Ümumrusiya siyahıyaalması və "Qafqaz təqvimi"nin 1903, 1914, 1915 və 1917-ci illərə aid məlumatları əsasında aparılan müqayisəli təhlil Şuşa və Zəngəzur qəzalarında erməni əhalisinin sayının sürətlə artdığını, Azərbaycan türklərinin isə nisbi üstünlüyünü itirdiyini göstərir. Belə olan halda biz əhalinin bölgəyə nə vaxt gəldiyini, saylarını və etnik tərkibini müəyyən etməklə, ermənilərin bölgəyə olan iddialarının siyasi motivlərini də üzə çıxarmış oluruq. Məqalədə Rusiya imperiyası dövründə tərtib olunmuş mənbələr, Rusiya imperiyasının qanunlar külliyyatı, eləcə də tarixi ədəbiyyatın məlumatlarına istinad edilmişdir.

**Açar sözlər:** Azərbaycan, Qarabağ, Zəngəzur, Şuşa, Cəbrayıl, Cavanşir, əhali, etnik tərkib

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**Məqaləyə istinad:** Aslanov, E. [2026]. QARABAĞ BÖLGƏSİNİN ƏHALİSİNİN SAY DİNAMİKASI VƏ ETNİK TƏRKİBİ (1900-1920-Cİ İLLƏR). *"Metafizika" jurnalı*, 9(1), səh.234-245.

<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2026.v9.i1.234-245>

**Məqalənin tarixçəsi:**

**Daxil olub:** 25.12.2025 **Yenidən baxılıb:** 09.01.2026 **Təsdiqlənib:** 02.02.2026 **Dərc olunub:** 15.03.2026



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## **1.Introduction**

XIX century is characterized as a period of radical changes in the political, administrative and ethno-demographic situation in the history of the region South Caucasus. The policy of expansion of the Russian Empire towards the region in this century was not limited only to military invasions, but also included the reorganization of the system of government of the occupied territories in accordance with the imperial model. One of the clearest examples of this process was the resettlement policy and administrative-territorial reforms carried out in Karabakh, the historical region of Northern Azerbaijan.

The Karabakh Khanate acted as an important political subject in the region since the second half of the XVIII century and continued to exist, preserving its ethnic, religious and cultural features. However, the Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) treaties signed as a result of the Russian-Iranian Wars at the beginning of the XIX century which resulted in the accession of Northern Azerbaijan, including Karabakh, to the Russian Empire.

After the abolition of the Karabakh Khanate, the Russian Empire began to organize administrative management here in accordance with the interests of the Empire. Initially formed as Karabakh province, this territory later turned into Shusha province, at different times it was ruled as part of Kaspi province, Shamakhi and Baku provinces, and finally Yelizavetpol province. These administrative changes were not accidental, but served to ensure the demographic, political and strategic interests of the Empire in the region.

The resettlement policy, implemented in parallel with the administrative-territorial reforms, played a decisive role in changing the ethno-demographic picture of Karabakh. Especially after 1828, the resettlement of tens of thousands of Armenians from the territories of the Ottoman Empire and Iran to the South Caucasus, including Karabakh, led to a gradual violation of the ethnic balance that existed in the region. Naturally, the main goal of the Russian Empire in the resettlement policy was to create an ethnic foothold consisting of a Christian population, in the future to ignite a national conflict in the region and maintain control in the region.

The results of these processes were clearly reflected in statistical sources already at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first All-Russian census of 1897, as well as the editions of the "Caucasian calendar" for different years, reveal in concrete figures the growth of the population in the Karabakh region and the changes in the ethnic composition. The rapid increase in the number of Armenian population in Shusha and Zangezur districts, and in some cases even surpassing the Azerbaijani Turks, demonstrates the real results of this policy. "Of the one million three hundred thousand Armenians living in Transcaucasia, more than one million were resettled here by us" [IIIабров, 1911, p.60]. This

confession of the Russian author very clearly shows what scale the resettlement process is.

However, the administrative-territorial division also had a direct impact on ethno-demographic processes. The creation of new districts, the change of the boundaries of existing districts, the organization of police areas not only strengthened the control mechanisms of the Empire, but also led to the disintegration of the historical and geographical integrity of the local population. These changes in Javanshir, Jabrayil and Zangazur districts have had a long-term impact on the socio-economic and ethnic structure of the region.

The Armenian-Muslim conflicts of the early XX century and the events of 1918-1920 were the consequences of the already formed tense ethno-demographic environment. As a result of these events, hundreds of Azerbaijani settlements were destroyed and thousands of people were forced to leave their native lands. As a result, the change in the demographic structure in the Karabakh region accelerated and historical processes created new political realities.

From this point of view that the study of the administrative-territorial reforms and ethno-demographic changes of the Karabakh region during the Russian Empire is of particular importance not only for regional history, but also for understanding the political and social processes taking place in modern times.

## **2. Karabakh region in the administrative-territorial reforms of the Russian Empire**

It is clear from the investigations that after the occupation of the Karabakh Khanate of Northern Azerbaijan by the Russian Empire, it was first transformed into the Karabakh province, in 1840 by the law "Institutions for the administration of the Transcaucasian region" dated April 10 and became part of Kaspi province [Полное собрание законов Российской империи, 1841, p.51-59], after the abolition of Kaspi province in 1846 it was transferred to Shamakhi and Baku provinces, and in 1867 under the newly created Yelizavetpol province. However, many areas of Shusha district, Jabrayil, Javanshir and Zangazur districts were included in the districts [according to the new administrative-territorial division of 1867, the current Kapan, Goris, Megri, Sisyan, Lachin, Gubadli, Zangilan districts were included in Yelizavetpol (Ganja) province under the name of Zangazur District-E.A.] turned. Thus, it is clear from the data that the historical Karabakh region, consisting of a large territory, since 1873 included Shusha, Jabrayil, Javanshir and Zangazur provinces and was under the jurisdiction of Yelizavetpol province.

## **3. Numerical dynamics and ethnic composition of the population of Shusha district**

Among the striking works on the numerical dynamics and ethnic composition of the population of the Karabakh region since the beginning of the XX century, it is worth noting the first All-Russian census in the Russian Empire, carried out in 1897. The results of this census, carried out in 1897, were published in St.Petersburg in 1904 [Первая Всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи, 1897].

According to the data of 1897, the total number of population of Shusha province in Yelizavetpol province was 138771 people. Of these, 74,171 were men and 64,600 were women. The central city of Shusha was Shusha. The population of the city of Shusha was 25881 people, of which 13318 were men and 12563 were women [Первая Всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи, 1897, p.1-2]. In other areas of Shusha district the population was 112890 people [Нәсәнов, 2022, p.104].

The data of the "*Caucasian calendar*" on the dynamics and ethnic composition of the population in Shusha district at the beginning of the XX century also attract attention. The 1905 edition of the "*Caucasian calendar*" contains information relating to 1903. According to the data of 1903, 144799 people lived in Shusha. The central city of the district was Shusha. The population of Shusha was 33825 people, of which 20557 were men and 13268 were women. In addition, from the data of the source it is clear that the Shusha accident was divided into police areas. There were 4 police stations in the accident. These were Khankendi, Gajar, Aghdam and Agjabadi police stations. There were 64 villages in Khankendi Police Area, 52 villages in Gajar Police Area, 77 villages in Agdam Police Area, and 52 villages in Agjabadi Police Area.

The data on the dynamics and ethnic composition of the population of Shusha district were also reflected in the 1914 edition of the "*Caucasus calendar*". According to the data of 1914, 5184 people of Shusha were Russian, 237 Georgian, 95262 Armenian, 56 dagli, 21 Yazidi, 126 Kurds, 77189 Muslims and 11 Jews. The total population of the accident was 178081 people. There were 42,568 inhabitants in Shusha, of which 1,188 were Russian, 30 were Polish and German, 37 were Georgian, 21,429 were Armenian, 18,865 were Muslim, and 7 were Jewish [Кавказский Календарь на 1914 год, 1913, p.230-233]. Thus, according to the data of 1914, after the mass resettlement of Armenians by the Russian Empire to the lands of Northern Azerbaijan, especially in the Shusha region, the balance in the number of Turkic-Muslim population was sharply disturbed and the numerical advantage of arrivals increased.

The dynamics of the population of the Shusha region can be traced in the 1915 edition of the "*Caucasus calendar*". From the data of 1915 it is clear that the area of Shusha was 4423.28 square versts. The total population of the

accident was 178081 people. Of these, 80,799 were female and 97,282 were male. According to the ethnic composition, 3089 Orthodox men, 2077 women, 52758 Armenian Gregorian men, 42012 Gregorian women, 72440 Azerbaijani Turks (38225 men, 34215 women) and others were registered in Shusha [Кавказский Календарь на 1915 год, 1914, p.233].

According to the data of 1915, the total population of the city of Shusha was 42568 people. The population of the city was motley in its ethnic composition. The population of the city was 18865 Azerbaijani Turks, 21959 Armenian-Gregorian, 7 Jewish, 1188 Orthodox (Slavic), 30 European, 37 Georgian and others [Кавказский Календарь на 1915 год, 1914, p.230-233].

According to the statistics of 1917, the total population of Shusha was 141727 people. According to the ethnic composition, Armenians made up 52.8 percent and Azerbaijani Turks made up 45.5 percent. In the city of Shusha, the Armenians also had a numerical advantage. Thus, they were 54 percent, and Azerbaijani Turks were 46 percent, in general, the number of population in the city was 41102 people [Həsənov, 2022, p.112]. As you can see from the data of both 1915 and 1917, the ethno-demographic situation in Shusha changed against the Azerbaijani Turks at the beginning of the XX century as a result of the resettlement.

#### **4.Population dynamics and ethnic composition of Zangazur district**

One of the administrative-territorial units of the Yelizavetpol province of the Karabakh region was Zangazur district. From the data of 1886 on the number and ethnic composition of the population of Zangezur district, it is clear that 53.3% of the population of the district were Azerbaijani Turks and 46.3% were Armenians. In 326 villages of the district, Azerbaijani Turks dominated in 154, Kurds in 91 villages and Armenians in 81 villages [Həsənov, 2022, p.104-105].

It should also be noted the data of the census carried out in 1897 regarding the numerical dynamics and ethnic composition of the population of Zangezur district. According to the first All-Russian census of 1897, the total population of Zangezur district was 137871 people. Of these, 72,592 were men and 65,279 were women [Первая Всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи, 1897, p.76].

According to 1897 data, there were 406 villages in Zangezur province. 314 of these villages were inhabited by Muslims and 92 by Armenians. The population of the accident was 71206 Azerbaijani Turks and 63622 Armenians. In addition, 1,807 Kurds and 1,006 Russians were registered in the accident [Первая Всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи, 1897, p.75-76].

Subsequent data on the number and ethnic composition of the population of Zangazur district are reflected in the "Caucasus calendar". In this regard, the issue of the "Caucasian calendar" dated 1903 attracts attention. According to 1903 data, Zangazur district, like other districts, was divided into police areas.

There were 5 police areas in the accident. These were Karakilsa, Khanazykh, Dondarly, Shikhauz, Kaver police areas. There were 52 villages in Garakilsa Police Area, 75 villages in Khanazikh Police Area, 201 villages in Dondarli Police Area, 98 villages in Shikhauz Police Area, and 23 villages in Kaver Police Area [Кавказский Календарь на 1904 год, 1903, p.32-33]. According to 1903 data, the total population of Zangezur province was 175656 people, which was 37545 people more than the indicator of 1897.

The 1917 edition of the "Caucasian calendar" on the dynamics and ethnic composition of the population of Zangazur district also attracts attention. According to 1917 data, the area of Zangezur province was 6742.92 square versts. According to the ethnic composition, 118146 people of Zangezur province were Azerbaijani Turks, 89906 Armenians, 1676 Slavs, 4 Europeans, 60 Georgians and others. In general, according to the data of 1917 in Zangezur district, 209951 population was registered, of which 108853 were men and 101098 were women [Кавказский Календарь на 1917 год, 1916, p.230-233].

#### **5.Population dynamics and ethnic composition of Javanshir district**

Information on the number and ethnic composition of the population of Javanshir district, one of the territories of the Karabakh region, was reflected in the 1903 edition of the "Caucasus calendar". According to 1903 data, there were three police stations in the Javanshir accident. These were Barda, Shirvanli and Boyahmadli police stations. There were 70 villages in Barda police station, 103 villages in Shirvanli police station and 49 villages in Boyahmadli plois station. The total number of villages by accident was 222. According to the data of 1903, the total population of Javanshir was 72908 people. Of these, 39,684 were male and 33,224 were female [Кавказский Календарь на 1904 год, 1903, p.32-33].

The 1917 edition of the "Caucasian calendar" also provides certain information on the dynamics of the population of Javanshir district and its ethnic composition. According to the data of 1917, the area of the Javanshir district was 4654,06 square versts. The total population in the accident was 60176 people, of which 33494 were men and 26682 were women. According to the ethnic composition, 37857 people of Javanshir district were Azerbaijani Turks, 20074 Armenians, 723 Slavs, 15 Gypsies, 13 Jews and others [Кавказский Календарь на 1917 год, 1916, p.230-233]. According to the number and ethnic composition of the population of Javanshir district, the data of the beginning of XX century shows that after the Turkmenchay and Edirne Treaties of 1828, a large number of Armenians were resettled to Javanshir region of Karabakh, and these resettlements attract significant attention to the ethnic composition of the population of the district.

#### **6.Numerical dynamics and ethnic composition of the population of Jabrayil district**



One of the districts that entered the borders of the Karabakh region and continued to exist under the jurisdiction of the Yelizavetpol province was the Jabrayil accident. The initial data on the number of the population of the Jabrayil district are reflected in the first All-Russian census of 1897. According to the data of 1897, the total population of the Jabrayil accident was 65840 people, of which 36020 were women and 29820 were men [Первая Всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи, 1897, p.16].

The administrative-territorial reforms carried out periodically by the Russian Empire in the South Caucasus in the second half of the XIX century led to a certain change in the borders and management of the provinces and provinces of Northern Azerbaijan. One of these changes was the decision of the State Council of 1888 on May 10. According to the decision, the draft law "On the establishment of the emergency police in the provinces of the South Caucasus" was approved by Emperor Alexander III. According to the law, in the provinces of the South Caucasus, including in the districts of the Yerevan province, from July 1888, from July 1, accident police areas were established. Following this law, the provinces of Northern Azerbaijan were actually divided into accidents, police areas, and the latter, in turn, into villages, which are smaller administrative-territorial units [Высочайшее утвержденное мнение Государственного Совета, 1890, p.211]. This administrative-territorial division began to be applied in Jabrayil District of Karabakh.

According to 1903 data, the Jabrayil accident was divided into three police stations. These were the areas of Garabulag, Hadrut and Jabrayil police areas. According to the source, there were 43 villages in Garabulag Police Area, 68 villages in Hadrut Police Area and 57 villages in Jabrayil Police Area. The total number of villages by accident was 168.

According to the data of 1903, there were 2292 houses in the Garabulag police area, where 20805 people were registered. Of this population, 11,277 were men and 9,528 were women. The total population of the Hadrut police area was 27,360 people, of which 14,993 were men and 12,367 were women. The number of houses in the Police Area reached 3328. The total population of Jabrayil police area of Jabrayil district was 22865 people, of which 12344 were men and 10521 were women. Thus, compared to the data of 1897, in 1903 there was an increase in the population of the Jabrayil district by 4643 people [Высочайшее утвержденное мнение Государственного Совета, 1890, p.211].

Ethnic cleansing carried out by the Russian Empire in Northern Azerbaijan since the beginning of the XIX century, genocide crimes against historical names did not pass by the Jabrayil accident. So, the accident was renamed the Garyagin accident in honor of Colonel Pavel Karyagin, a participant in the I Russo-Iranian war since 1905 [Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyəti Ensiklopediyası, 2005, p.138].

One of the sources of attention regarding the number and ethnic composition of the population of the Garyagin district is the data of the "Caucasian calendar" for 1915. According to the data of 1915, the area of the Garyagin accident was 3276.31 square versts. The total population of the accident was 91645 people. Of these, 49,687 were men and 42,158 were women [Кавказский Календарь на 1915 год, 1914, p.230-233].

According to 1915 data, 65397 people of Garyagin district were Azerbaijani Turks, 24599 Armenians, 1707 Slavs, 98 poles and Germans, 42 Kurds, and 2 Jews [Кавказский Календарь на 1915 год, 1914, p.230-233].

According to 1917 data, the population of Garyagin district was 86197 people, of which 21405 were Armenians, 64271 were Azerbaijani Turks, and 521 were other peoples [Кавказский Календарь на 1917 год, 1916, p.36]. According to the data of the "Caucasian calendar", it can be said that at the beginning of the XX century, Azerbaijani Turks dominated the ethnic composition of the population in Garyagin district. In percentage terms, this advantage was 74.5 percent.

It is clear from the researches that one of the main factors in the change of ethno-demographic situation in favor of arrivals in many districts in the Karabakh region, especially in Shusha and Zangazur districts of the early XX century was ethnic cleansing and genocides against local Turks-Muslims. In this regard, M.M. Navvab in his work "Armenian - Muslim Case in 1905-1906", gave compact information about the massacres committed by Armenian armed groups in Baku, Irevan, Shusha, Irevan, Nakhchivan, Shusha, Jabrayil, Zangazur districts and countermeasures taken by Muslims. In general, as a result of the Armenian-Muslim riots of 1905-1906, more than 200 Azerbaijani settlements were destroyed in the territory of Yerevan and Yelizavetpol (Ganja) provinces, and the population was subjected to genocide [Mustafa, 2009. 31 mart, p.4]. The genocides carried out by Armenians against the Azerbaijani Turks were continued in 1918-1920. The ethnic cleansing, which began in March 1918 in the Baku province, was continued in the Karabakh region in the summer of 1918. In the Zangezur accident, 115 Muslim villages were destroyed and wiped off the face of the Earth. In early 1920, the Armenian atrocities in Zangezur took on a more brutal picture. The crimes committed in Zangazur were carried out under the leadership of the executioner Andronicus. [İsgəndərov, 2006, p.79-80].

## **7.The result**

Thus, the study of data on the number dynamics and ethnic composition of the Karabakh region of Northern Azerbaijan at the beginning of the XX century shows that the territory of Karabakh was part of Yelizavetpol province from 1867 to 1929 and included 4 accidents such as Shusha, Zangezur, Javanshir and Jabrayil. As a result of the imperialist policy pursued by the Russian

Empire in the South Caucasus, the resettlement of Armenians to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan began in 1828. After the occupation of the Karabakh Khanate, Russia, which plans to create a “new homeland” for the arrivals, carried out administrative-territorial changes in this territory, like many other regions of Northern Azerbaijan, and laid the foundation for future processes. As a logical conclusion of this policy, the number of arrivals in such districts as Shusha and Zangazur has sharply increased, surpassing the Azerbaijani Turks at the beginning of the XX century. Those who received blessings from the Russian Empire became an instrument of this policy and carried out ethnic cleansing and genocide crimes in Northern Azerbaijan, including in the districts of Karabakh at the beginning of the XX century, which led to the violation of ethno-demographic processes in the region and the departure of Azerbaijani Turks from their homeland. However, the Armenians settled in the region could not fully realize their desires. The establishment of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918 led to ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Karabakh, prevention of genocide crimes, and keeping the region under the subordination of Azerbaijan.

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