

February 20



February 20, 2019 marked the 31st anniversary of the Artsakh liberation movement. On this day back in 1988, reflecting the will of local population, Artsakh's legislature petitioned Soviet leadership to transfer the autonomy from Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia, aiming to correct Stalin's self-willed decision of 1921. The decision was made in order to end decades of discrimination and oppression by a foreign government.

The Communist authorities fiercely opposed Artsakh's aspirations for democracy and dignity, and tried to suppress the unprecedented for the Soviet area democratic movement by deploying troops in Artsakh to instill fear and threaten with a crackdown. Nonetheless, rallies and strikes across Artsakh did not stop.

On February 27 to 29, 1988, in response to peaceful demonstrations in Stepanakert, hundreds of miles away from Artsakh well-organized Azeri mobs attacked and murdered hundreds of ethnic Armenians in towns and villages throughout Azerbaijan, including in the largest cities of Sumgait, Baku and Kirovabad (former Armenian Gandzak). People were attacked only for being Armenians. Impunity and lack of reaction from then central authorities instigated criminal leadership in Baku to further escalate hostilities and launch a full-scale military aggression against Artsakh.



However, intentions to suppress Artsakh's quest for freedom have failed. Artsakh eventually forced the aggressor into a cease-fire, which has been in force since May 1994.

Today, the free and sovereign Republic of Artsakh continues to develop as a democratic, safe and economically prosperous home, as well as to strengthen its defense capabilities. The young republic lives basing on the vision and values that have been pushing Artsakhtsis to stand up for their rights and dignity throughout the Soviet history, and most lately, on February 20, 1988.