

AZERBAIJAN

Destruction of the Armenian Cemetery at Djulfa – Continued

In the ICOMOS World Report 2002/2003, we submitted a report on the destruction of the outstanding Armenian cemetery of the former town of Djulfa (also Julfa, Jugha) in Nachitchevan, now under Azerbaijan's political sovereignty (pp. 44-47, with photos). The period of time covered by our report ended in January 2003, when the Armenian Bishop of Tabris (Iran) informed us that he went to the Iranian side of the river Araxes opposite to the cemetery of Djulfa to see with his own eyes what had seemed incredible to him: that the 1500 years old cemetery had completely been flattened. Yet, this was not the end.

Between 10th and 14th of December 2005, vandals, who had not been held accountable for their previous crimes, finally succeeded in purging the cemetery area from all the remnants of khatchkars (standing tombstones): Using heavy hammers and pick-axes, about 200 soldiers of the Azerbaijani army reduced the displaced khatchkars to a heap of crushed pieces which were loaded onto lorries and emptied down the bank of the river Araxes.

In early March 2006, the Nachitchevan authorities stationed a firing range on the Djulfa Cemetery and turned the site into a "military zone" so that they could ban foreign missions and observers from entering it. Indeed, in the issue of May 30, 2006, *The Independent* communicated that in mid-April 2006 the Azerbaijani authorities had refused the request of a group of members of the European Parliament to visit the cemetery and, furthermore, that the response of the group to the refusal had been commented by Baku as being "hysterical and full of prejudices".

A comprehensive documentation was submitted to UNESCO in October 2006 by an international parliamentary delegation: *Parliamentary Group Switzerland-Armenia (ed.)*, "The Destruction of Jugha and the Entire Armenian Cultural Heritage in Nakhijevan". (Copies can be ordered from *SAA Switzerland-Armenia Association*,



"Requiem" for Armenian cultural monuments

Bern www.armenian.ch). This documentation includes Mr. Steven Simm's account of his visit to Nachitchevan in August 2005. To sum up his detailed report: Also in the inner regions of the province there is nothing left but some sparse relics of hundreds of Armenian cultural monuments, like monasteries and churches.

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Before its wilful demolition: the cemetery with thousands of standing khatchkars (Photo: Armen Haghazarian, 1976)





One of the khatchkars as an example of the highly developed Armenian art of masonry, dated 1571 (Photo: Zaven Sargissian, 1987)



Azeri soldiers breaking the khatchkars to pieces with heavy hammers (Photo: Arthur Gevorgian, December 10-14, 2005)



The crushed pieces of khatchkars emptied into the Araxes-facing side of the railway (Photos: Arthur Gevorgian, December 10-14, 2005)



An Azerbaijani "military base" and "firing range" stationed at the site of the annihilated cemetery (Photo: Arthur. Gevorgian, March 2006)

