



Ressort: Politik

## A Friendly Enemy...

The Netherlands, 10.02.2025 [ENA]

Recently, tensions between Azerbaijan and Russia have risen sharply. The main reason for this was the crash of an AZAL passenger plane flying from Baku to Grozny on December 25 last year. A natural question arises: why did a plane heading to Grozny crash near Aktau, Kazakhstan? What does this have to do with Russia?

Initially, it was said that bad weather caused the crash.

However, later it was revealed that the plane was shot down by Russia's air defense system. After the crash, Russia did not allow the plane to land on its territory. At first, Russia denied responsibility, but later admitted it indirectly at different levels.

Azerbaijan, however, demands an official acknowledgment and a formal apology from Russia. President Ilham Aliyev strongly emphasized this in his speech. According to Azerbaijani media, Aliyev also raised this issue in a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on December 28. He told Putin directly that the plane was shot down by Russia.

Some sources claim that a few days after the incident, on December 28, Putin called Aliyev and apologized.

Other sources suggest that Putin only expressed regret indirectly. However, this is not enough for Azerbaijan, which insists on an official apology and recognition of the event.

It should be noted that out of the 67 people on board, 38 died, while 29 survived. Among the crew, three members, including both pilots, lost their lives, and two survived. Russia has still not officially admitted its responsibility.

Due to this, both countries' media— including state-controlled outlets— have engaged in open accusations against each other. The fact that official media takes such a strong stance suggests that these accusations are being encouraged at a higher level.

A few days ago, Azerbaijan decided to close the "Russian House" cultural center in Baku. This decision further angered Russia.

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### Historical Tensions Between Azerbaijan and Russia

In Azerbaijan, attitudes toward Russia have not always been positive. There are many reasons for this, some of which have been passed down from generation to generation as part of historical memory. Here are a few key events:

- In 1813 and 1828, Russia and Iran divided Azerbaijan into two parts, an event deeply embedded in Azerbaijani historical consciousness.
- In 1920, Soviet Russia occupied Azerbaijan again after it had gained independence in 1918.
- During Stalin's repressions in the 1930s, many Azerbaijani intellectuals, poets, and writers were arrested and executed.
- In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Russia supported Armenia in occupying Azerbaijani territories.
- On February 26, 1992, Russia's 366th motorized rifle regiment, alongside Armenian forces, carried out massacres in the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly (recognized as genocide by several countries).

This list could go on. Given this history, it is not difficult to understand why tensions between Azerbaijan and Russia continue to rise. Even during periods of relatively good relations, many Azerbaijanis have referred to Russia as a "friendly enemy."

### Current Situation

Recently, the Azerbaijani government sent \$1 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Azerbaijan has supported Ukraine before, but the timing of this latest aid package is significant, and it has not been well received in Russia.

Meanwhile, in Azerbaijan, the government's tough stance against Russia is being welcomed by the public. Many Azerbaijanis see Russia as the main culprit in the tragedies that have affected their nation over the past two centuries, including the conflict with Armenia. It is important to note that this sentiment is directed not at the Russian people, but at Russia's imperialist policies.

Over the years, Azerbaijan and Russia have had many ups and downs in their relationship. At times, tensions have escalated, only to improve again. In fact, in 2022, the two countries even signed an alliance agreement.

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The famous writer Alexandre Dumas once wrote in The Count of Monte Cristo:  
"In politics, there are no people, only ideas. There are no feelings, only interests."

Similarly, there is another well-known saying:  
"In politics, there are no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests."

The question now is: whose interests will prevail this time? We will likely find out soon.

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