


Letter to the Editor

War in the Time of COVID-19: A Humanitarian Catastrophe in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia

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Despite the Doctors Against the War Collaborators' commentary in the Lancet Global Health,¹ from Azerbaijan's point of view, the second Karabakh War started with Armenia's attack on 27 September 2020.²

Armenia's attack in the context of Armenian occupation of the territory, which has lasted for 30 years, sparked a war between 2 unresting sides.

Although the war "was expected to continue only in the hot contact zone," the third-largest city of Azerbaijan, Ganja, which is located 20 km from the border along with Berde and Terter were also targeted 4 times on separate dates. Armenian side targeted civilian populations and attacked with ballistic missiles.^{2,3}

Between 27 September and 30 October, 91 civilians, including 11 children and 27 women, lost their lives, 400 people were injured, including 14 babies, 36 children, and 101 women. Of the 2783 martyrs who were killed in the war, the average age was around 20 years. During the attacks of Armenia, 2442 houses, 92 apartments, and 428 public buildings became unusable. The hydroelectric water plant in the Mingachevir region was attacked several times, but the Azerbaijan defense system neutralized the attack. All of these have been featured in the world media.⁴ The damage caused was not limited to the war only; while the cities were evacuated at the end of the 44 days of the war, and houses and forests were burned. Additionally, the Armenian army laid forbidden land mines on the roads while retreating, despite the Mine Ban Convention, which was adopted in 1997 and prohibited the landmines.⁵

While all countries' health systems were struggling with the pandemic, Azerbaijan had to wage this fight in the harsh Caucasian winter in the middle of this war (Figure 1). Azerbaijan has lost many healthcare workers in the battle against the pandemic. In this respect, we share the pain of healthcare professionals and civilian casualties in Armenia.

War is something that no country, no human wants. We hope that children and adult civilians who died will not be ignored, and one-sided propaganda news will not be respected. Every child dying in the world, every young brain, is an extinguished candle for humanity and science. We look forward to peace in the region, for everyone to retain their civil life as soon as possible.

On behalf of the Azerbaijan Asthma and Allergy Research Group (AZAAD).

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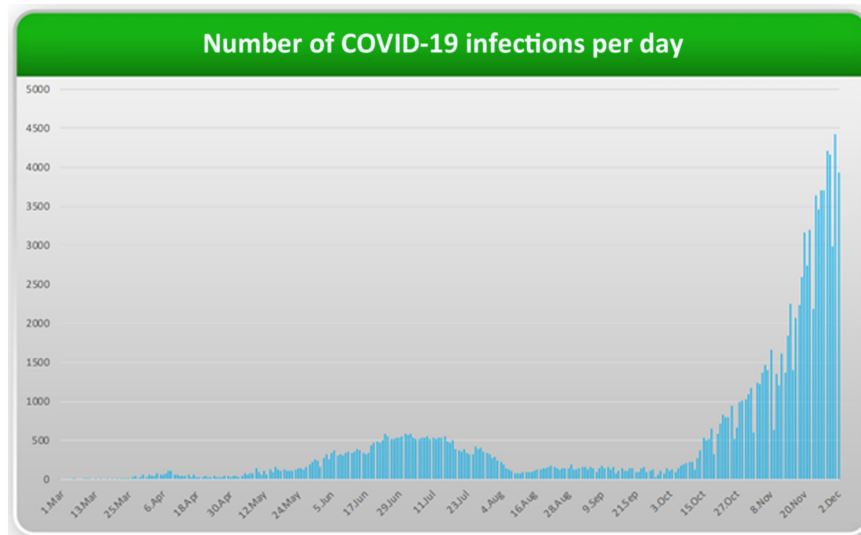


Figure 1. The increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Azerbaijan since the start of the second Karabakh War, beginning from 5 March 2020, with the first COVID-19 case detected in Azerbaijan.⁵

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