

Concerns Mount Over Azerbaijan's Use of UFC Baku Debut to Cover Up Genocide

Armenian National Committee of America Urges UFC to Speak Out Against Azerbaijan's War Crimes and Human Rights Abuses

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, June 18, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ultimate Fighting Championship's (UFC) decision to make its debut in Baku on June 21st, so soon after Azerbaijan's violent seizure of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and the forced displacement of its entire indigenous Armenian Christian population, is drawing increasing criticism from human rights advocates, Armenian diaspora groups and allies, as well as international observers, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

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*Aram Hamparian, ANCA
Executive Director*

“The international community faces a stark choice: remain complicit in Azerbaijan's propaganda campaign, or use these high-profile moments to shed light on the suffering that continues behind closed doors,” stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “For many Armenians and human rights defenders, June 21st may not be remembered as a celebration of sport, but rather as a missed opportunity to hold a genocidal regime accountable. Azerbaijan may succeed in bringing the UFC to Baku — but it cannot punch its way out of the truth.”

The ANCA has set up a public petition urging UFC CEO Dana White to use the June 21st Baku event as a platform to condemn Azerbaijan's genocide of Armenian Christians.

To sign the petition, visit anca.org/UFC.

In September 2023, Azerbaijan launched a military offensive against the ethnic Armenian



population of Artsakh, resulting in the forced depopulation of the region in just days. [Over 120,000 Armenians were driven from their homes](#), and Azerbaijani forces detained key political and military leaders of the former Artsakh government and civilians. [Human rights watchdogs](#) have described the operation as ethnic cleansing – even genocide - with grave violations of international law including the destruction of religious and cultural heritage, arbitrary detention, and denial of humanitarian access.

Despite these atrocities, Azerbaijan has doubled down on efforts to host international events. Its hosting of COP29, the UN's major climate summit last year, raised [global alarms](#) among environmentalists and rights groups alike. In the lead-up to COP29, Azerbaijan intensified its crackdown on domestic dissent, arresting journalists, NGO workers, and political activists. A similar concern now looms over the UFC's Baku card: that sport will be used as a distraction from repression, rather than a platform for global unity.



Perhaps most telling is the conspicuous absence of any prominent Armenian fighters from the UFC lineup. Armenian UFC athletes, such as Arman Tsarukyan and Edmen Shahbazyan, are notably absent from the Baku card. In 2019, Armenian soccer star Henrikh Mkhitaryan declined to travel to Baku for the Europa League final, citing credible security risks.

The ANCA maintains that UFC, by stepping into Baku, risks aligning itself with a regime that systematically violates human rights, censors press freedoms, and imprisons political opponents.

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