

## **Azerbaijan: Calls to release former OMON fighters and to send to fight against Armenians**



26/04/2016

The leader of the so-called “Karabakh Liberation Organization” Akif Nagi released a statement, according to which, as a result of the conflict escalation in the beginning of April, it is necessary to release the fighters of the Azerbaijani Special Purpose Police Unit (OMON) from jail and send them to the first line of the front, Faktxeber reports.

In Nagi’s opinion, the public attitude towards the OMON fighters should change “radically,” as it is necessary “to really take into account the service these people provided.” Many of them are still serving a life term in prison, the website reports citing Moderator.az.

The “Karabakh Liberation Organization” leader thinks that since the “well-known events” (the anti-state rebellion initiated by the OMON fighters in March of 1995), much time has passed, and the imprisonment has “cleaned their guilt long ago.”

The public opinion about the Special Purpose Police Unit fighters in Azerbaijan should be presented “in a positive light,” and they should be released and sent to the front.

“They need to be given a new chance of showing themselves in the battlefield. All the imprisoned OMON fighters should be released and sent to the front,” he sums up.

The OMON (Special Purpose Police Unit), a military structure of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Azerbaijan SSR created in the beginning of 1990, had 3000 members and took part in the Operation Ring initiated by the USSR and Azerbaijani SSR central authorities.

The aim of the Operation was the forced deportation of the Armenians from Getashen, Martunashen, and other villages around and inside Karabakh with the help of the Soviet Army.

According to Thomas de Waal, the OMON fighters attacked houses, robbed, and beat many villagers. Over ten people were killed, and most of them were 80 or 90-year old people. Over fifty people were taken hostages, half of them were later exchanged with captive soldiers, and the rest were sent to prison in Ganja.

After the Soviet troops' recall from the conflict zone on July 6, 1991, the Azerbaijani Special Purpose Police Unit started its own operation in the Shahumyan region of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast.

However, meeting a severe resistance, it receded suffering losses in personnel.

During the operation Ring, the Special Purpose Police Unit veteran Rogdai Karaev denied the death of Armenian civilians in the villages where the operation was conducted, as well as the fact that the OMON fighters were killing people indiscriminately.

During the war, the OMON was actively involved in the military action, together with the mercenary-Mujahedeen from Afghanistan.

After the Azerbaijani independence was proclaimed, the detachment was renamed the Special Purpose Police Unit.

However, it was disbanded after the deputy minister of the internal affairs, colonel Javadov, started a rebellion on March 13, 1995. On March 17, the army subdivisions stormed the Special Purpose Police Unit headquarters in the Baku outskirts; as a result, Javadov and more than 50 people, generally the Special Purpose Police Unit fighters, were killed.

Hundreds of the Special Purpose Police Unit members, as well as several soldiers, policemen, and civilians were condemned to various terms of imprisonment, from 3 to 15 years, up to death penalty, which was later replaced by life imprisonment.

The Special Purpose Police Unit as a law enforcement agency in the structure of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Internal Affairs was eliminated.