

Caucasus Heritage Watch

Monitoring Report #4
October 2022

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CAUCASUS HERITAGE WATCH

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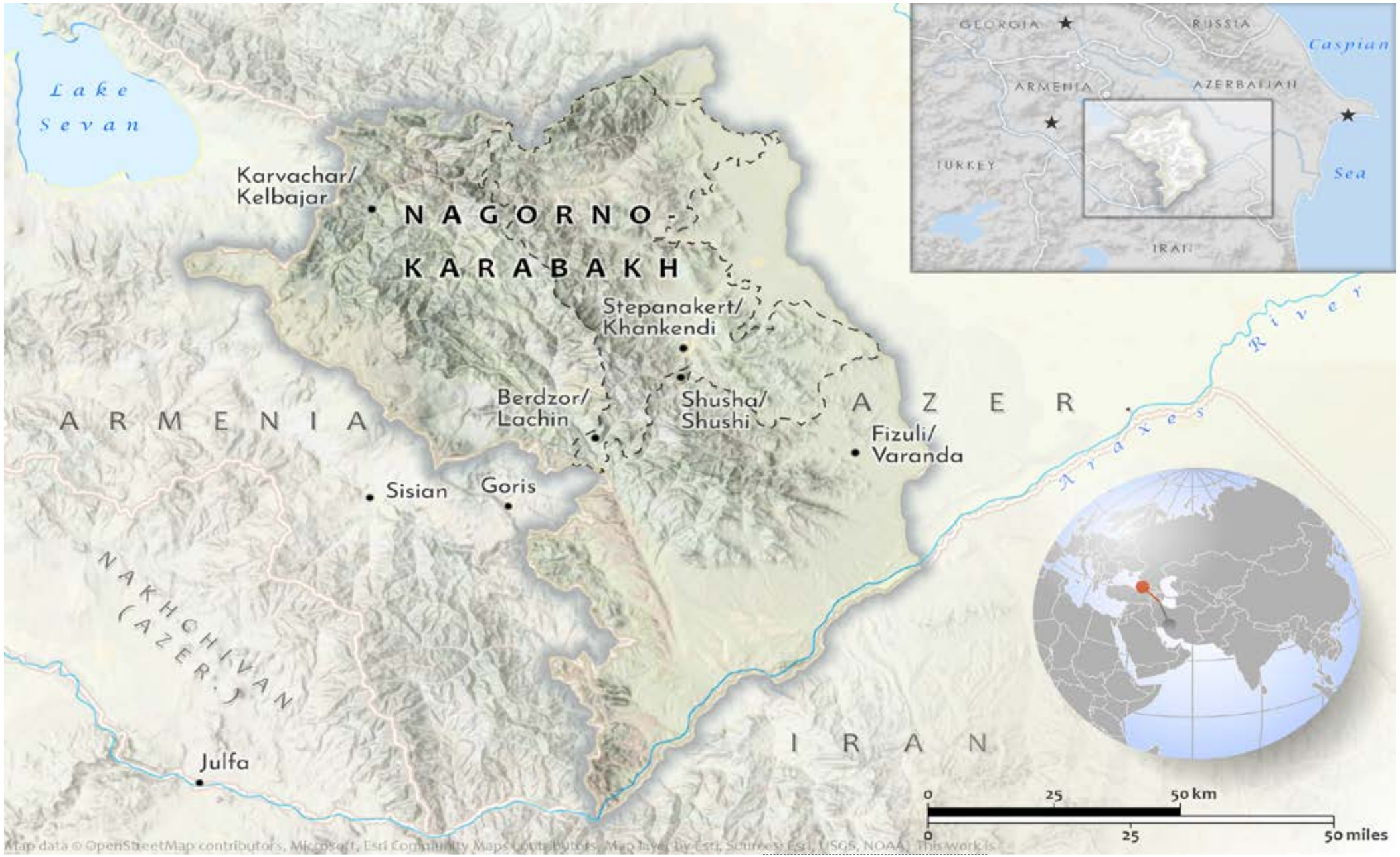
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WHERE WE **WORK**

- *Total Sites in Database: 2,002*
- *Sites Currently Monitored: 264*
- *Total Area of Region: approx. 12,100 km2*
- *Area of Monitoring: approx. 4,800 km2*

CAUCASUS HERITAGE WATCH

OUR **MISSION**

"Preservation of one's own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures."
-Cesar Chavez

Caucasus Heritage Watch is a research initiative founded in 2020 to monitor and document endangered and damaged cultural heritage using high-resolution satellite imagery. We strive to reveal visual evidence regarding past and present cultural erasure using the latest technologies of earth observation. Our purpose is to encourage accountability, inform public policy, support truth and reconciliation, and remove cultural heritage from the front lines of regional conflicts.

CAUCASUS HERITAGE WATCH

OUR **GOALS**

- **Truth-telling**: Investigating and monitoring past and future damage to cultural heritage can contribute to the work of truth and reconciliation. In contexts of war and genocide, cultural aerospace can bear witness to the condition of cultural heritage sites. These facts provide proof to counter state denialism, falsification, and other abuses that place heritage sites at the center of political conflict. Social repair can only happen when societies come to terms with troubled pasts and difficult truths.

- **Deterrence**: There are few instruments for deterring the destruction of cultural heritage within a state's sovereign borders. Satellite-based monitoring has the potential to discourage or restrain state actors from intentional erasure both through the act of bearing witness, and by the dissemination of authoritative research to relevant national and international agencies and publics.

- **Accountability**: In contexts of conflict and genocide, abuses to cultural heritage are often clandestine, making it difficult to hold actors accountable. Satellite-based monitoring that reveals the destruction of cultural heritage can provide a forensic resource so that the public can hold responsible parties accountable for harms, including their own leaders.

- **Innovation**: Caucasus Heritage Watch works to develop new techniques in the use of geospatial technologies for sustained, large-scale monitoring of cultural heritage at risk. As researchers, we seek to innovate new and transferrable methodologies that can amplify our practical impact and disseminate workflows that can empower partners in the region and assist researchers in other parts of the world.



FROM
CAUCASUS HERITAGE WATCH

October 2022

As CHW prepared this report on our heritage monitoring activities to date this year, tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan escalated to higher levels than they have been since the Second Karabakh War of 2020. The tenuous ceasefire that offered a fragile stability in Nagorno-Karabakh broke down on September 13-14, as Azerbaijan's military set its sights on Armenia itself. Amidst losses on the battlefield, credible allegations of brutal killings of captured Armenian servicemen and women, and concerns of renewed full-scale war, troubling developments in cultural heritage protection also held CHW's attention.

The present report documents CHW's findings from two satellite monitoring cycles in Spring and Summer of 2022. The most concerning discovery during this reporting period was the destruction of the 18th-19th century Armenian church of St. Sargis in the village of Susanlyq/Mokhrenes, which took place between March and July. This represents the first major violation of a ruling issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December 2021 calling on Azerbaijan to prevent such abuses. The destruction of St. Sargis demonstrates that concerns over the fate of historic Armenian monuments in Azerbaijan are well-justified. And it reaffirms the absolute necessity of regular and systematic cultural heritage monitoring in the skies above Karabakh.

The most concerning discovery during this reporting period was the destruction of the 18th-19th century Armenian church of St. Sargis in the village of Susanlyq/Mokhrenes, which took place between March and July. This represents the first major violation of a ruling issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December 2021 calling on Azerbaijan to prevent such abuses.

Our spring observations earlier this year noted only one new site that we assessed as 'threatened', a cemetery whose name and location we do not disclose because doing so could put it in greater jeopardy. This, combined with the low number of site impacts observed the prior fall, coupled with the ICJ ruling, had initially offered a sliver of hope that the overall threats to Armenian cultural heritage under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction might be ebbing. Unfortunately, the reduced number of site impacts in recent cycles represented what seem now to have been simply a seasonal pause in development projects, as our summer monitoring registered an eight-fold increase in observed site impacts since the spring.

Overall, of the 264 sites monitored by CHW during the summer, the number of newly impacted sites rose from one in the spring to eight, most of which (as we detail in the report below) were churches and cemeteries that we now assess as 'threatened' due to encroaching road construction and development/demolition activity traceable in satellite imagery. The areas of greatest threat in this cycle are concentrated in the territories of Khojavend/Hadrut and Lachin/Berdzor. CHW was dismayed to discover the destruction of the St. Sargis church of Mokhrenes/Susanlyq (along with large swathes of the village), and while the agents and causes of the destruction remain unknown, the government's failure to preserve and protect this historic site is self-evident. In addition to the loss of St. Sargis church, we documented new threats to churches in Arakhish/Arikli, Pichenis/Vakunis, and Mataghis/Suqovushan caused by construction.

CHW's intensive program of satellite monitoring is founded on increasingly clear evidence that the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Azerbaijan has been a policy of the government since 1997. On September 12, 2022, CHW released a detailed 430-page Special Report and website, entitled "Silent Erasure," on the decade-long campaign of state-sanctioned destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. This project, staggering in both its scope and its stealth, resulted in the quiet eradication of over 100 historic Armenian churches and cemeteries. It represents the crowning achievement of the Aliyev regime's insistence to refute any prior existence of Armenians in the region—the very definition of 'silent erasure'. Our Special Report concluded by observing that the near total eradication of Armenian heritage in Nakhchivan offers a grim warning that a similar fate may await Armenian sites in Karabakh now under Azerbaijani control. On the same September day that we released our Special Report on Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan initiated new hostilities, launching attacks into Armenia, signaling the possibility of a broader conflict and raising new concerns for cultural heritage. And so our work continues.

At stake in our work are not merely old buildings and their silent stones, but collective memories, deep histories, lived landscapes, and the prospects for coexistence.

Despite a flurry of recent diplomatic activity, the path to long-term peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan seems as unclear as it has ever been, with the region's largest ersatz stabilizing force mired in a quagmire of its own making in Ukraine. Regional security partnerships designed to ensure stability have not lived up to their promises of mutual defense. Brief visits by US congressional leaders are encouraging but will not be enough on their own. As fleeting headlines of the international press shift their attention to and from the Caucasus, CHW's gaze will remain doggedly fixed on documenting the changing condition of medieval and early modern cultural heritage so that the fate of Nakhchivan's historical landscapes is not repeated in Karabakh. At stake in our work are not merely old buildings and their silent stones, but collective memories, deep histories, lived landscapes, and the prospects for coexistence.

In addition to our ongoing monitoring work, CHW is currently preparing our second Special Report on the fate of Islamic and Azerbaijani cultural heritage sites in Karabakh after 30 years of Armenian administration. The caustic debate over the stewardship of cultural heritage has to date been filled with invective and short on fact. Our goal is to provide a clear, empirically verifiable account of how both parties to the conflict have treated the heritage sites of the other, and by doing so provide the foundations of truth that might one day support steps toward reconciliation.

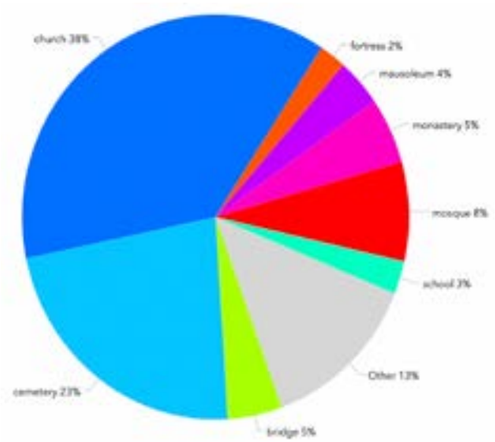
As always, you can follow our activities on Twitter @CaucasusHW, and for real-time updates see our monitoring dashboard at https://caucasusheritage.cornell.edu. Finally, the high-resolution satellite imagery required for our detailed site assessments is expensive. In order to ensure that our work can continue in future years, we need your help. Please go to our website and click on the "Donate Now" button. You will be taken to a contribution site for The Aragats Foundation, a US-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is supporting our work. Every donation to the Aragats Foundation's CHW initiative will go directly toward project expenses to ensure that we can continue this difficult work well into the future.

Ian Lindsay, Adam T. Smith, and Lori Khatchadourian,
CHW Co-Principal Investigators

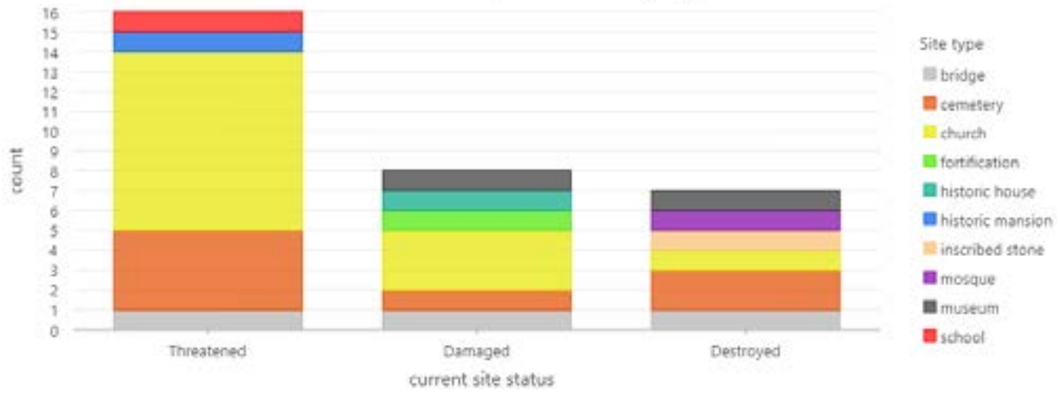


CHW **DASHBOARD**

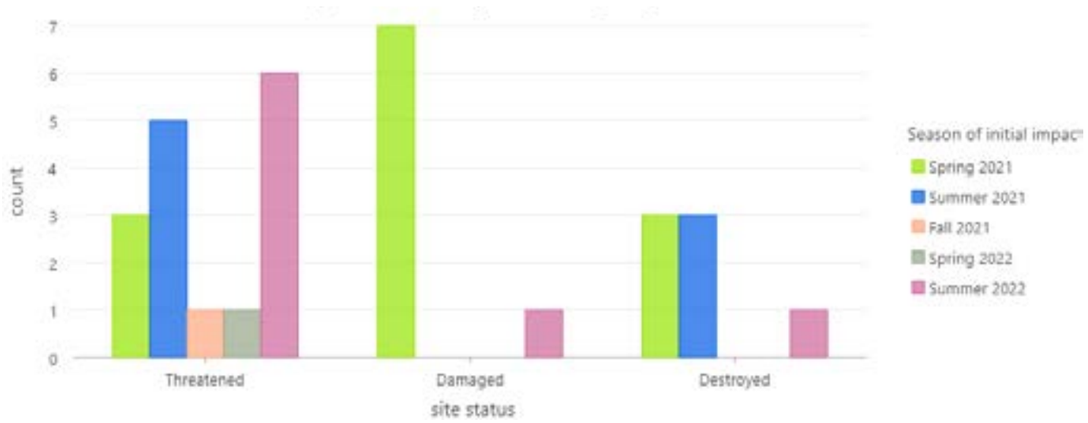
SITES MONITORED BY TYPE



IMPACT STATUS BY SITE TYPE



SITE IMPACTS BY SEASON



IMPACTED SITES LIST

Site #	Name	Type	Status	Impact Observed
AN.225-0	T'ukhnakal Mansion	mansion	threatened	Summer 2021
AN.226-0	S. Astvatsatsin	church	threatened	Spring 2021
AN.342-0	Sghnakh cemetery	cemetery	destroyed	Summer 2021
AN.344-6	Vank'asar	church	threatened	Spring 2021
HT.061-0	St. Sargis Church of Mokhrenes	church	destroyed	Summer 2022
HT.069-1	Mets T'agher/Böyük Tağlar N. Cemetery	cemetery	destroyed	Spring 2021
HT.070-0	Makun	bridge	destroyed	Summer 2021
HT.071-0	Tahis Bridge	bridge	threatened	Summer 2021
HT.072-0	Halevor Bridge	bridge	damaged	Summer 2022
HT.074-0	Amenap'rkich	church	threatened	Spring 2021
HT.173-0	Mokhrenes Cemetery	cemetery	threatened	Summer 2022
KR.009-1	Mrchmants'	church	threatened	Fall 2021
KR.022-0	school	school	threatened	Spring 2021
LN.004-0	Afandilar Mosque	mosque	destroyed	Spring 2021
LN.016-0	Arakhish Church	church	threatened	Summer 2022
LN.016-1	Arakhish Cemetery	cemetery	threatened	Summer 2022
LN.017-0	Zorakhach' Church	church	threatened	Summer 2022
LN.055-1	Ughtamejk' Cemetery	cemetery	threatened	Spring 2022
LN.187-0	Vakunis Church	church	threatened	Summer 2022
MI.023-0	S. Astvatsatsin	church	threatened	Summer 2021
MT.161-0	S. Yeghisha of Mataghis	church	threatened	Summer 2022
SH.052-0	Ghazanchets'ots' S. Amenap'rkich	church	damaged	Spring 2021
SH.052-2	Ghazanchets'ots' Inscribed Stone	inscribed stone	destroyed	Spring 2021
SH.053-0	Kanach Zham or S. Hovhannes Mkrtich	church	damaged	Spring 2021
SH.054-0	Surb Meghrets'ots'	church	damaged	Spring 2021
SH.063-0	Shusha/Shushi Geological Museum	museum	damaged	Summer 2021
SH.074-0	The Zhamharyan's house	house	damaged	Spring 2021
SH.093-0	Shushi Eastern Rampart	fortification	damaged	Spring 2021
SH.101-2	Shushi Northern Cemetery	cemetery	damaged	Spring 2021
SH.241-1	Fine Arts Museum sculpture garden	museum	destroyed	Summer 2021

Sites in white are newly impacted during this reporting period.

A NOTE ON TOPONYMY

At CHW, we are aware of the fierce interest in place names in the region. Battles over naming have become extensions of battles over land. At CHW, we see the multiplicity of place names in the region as a result of the region's cosmopolitan past. Hence we have elected to use both Armenian and Azerbaijani place names for sites where toponyms differ as a reminder of the region's multiculturalism. We regularly alter which name comes first in order to avoid any sense that either name has priority for the work that we do. Our goal is to keep the focus squarely on the heritage sites--their long term preservation and integrity--and allow for multiple ways of referring to them.

OUR FUNDERS

We are deeply grateful to the individual donors and organizations that support CHW's work.

Funding and facilities for our work has been generously provided by these institutions:

The Armenian General Benevolent Union
The Aragats Foundation
The Ford Foundation
Cornell University
Purdue University
The University of Southern California

We are also supported by public donations to our efforts. You can join the public network supporting CHW by donating to us through The Aragats Foundation's CHW funding campaign. Click the link or scan the QR code at right to donate. If you are interested in exploring how you can help support our work, get in touch with us.

OUR PARTNERS

MONUMENT WATCH

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY & ETHNOGRAPHY, RA

RESEARCH ON ARMENIAN ARCHITECTURE

OUR TEAM



LORI KHATCHADOURIAN

Associate Professor, Near Eastern Studies
Cornell University

Prof. Khatchadourian has been working in the South Caucasus since 1995, first in political development and since 2003 in archaeology. Her work has been supported by the NSF, NEH, and ACLS, among other granting organizations. She is the author of Imperial Matter.



IAN LINDSAY

Associate Professor, Anthropology
Purdue University

Prof. Lindsay has been studying the history and prehistory of the South Caucasus since 2000, with support from the National Science Foundation and other agencies. His archaeological practice incorporates the use of GIS and terrestrial and aerial remote sensing techniques.



ADAM T. SMITH

Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences, Anthropology, Cornell University

Prof. Smith has been conducting archaeological research in the Caucasus since 1992. He is the co-founder of Project ArAGATS, the oldest international archaeological collaboration in the region. He is a former Guggenheim fellow and author of numerous works on the region.



HUSIK GHULYAN

Research Consultant, CHW

Dr. Ghulyan is an independent researcher and PhD in Urban & Environmental Studies. His dissertation examined the production of urban space in Turkey. His current research studies the political geographies of modern & Soviet Armenia.



SALPI BOCCHIERIYAN

Monitoring Consultant, CHW

Ms. Bocchieriyan is an archaeologist at Death Valley National Park and has an MA in Archaeology from Cornell University with a thesis on mortuary practice in ancient Armenia. She has also worked in Greece, Turkey, and Romania.

WHAT WE **DO**

Monitoring

Our inventory of cultural heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh has grown to include over 2000 entries spread across an area of roughly 12,000 square kilometers.

At any particular moment, we have hundreds of discrete locations under satellite surveillance, including churches and mosques, cemeteries and fields of carved stones, bridges, and other cultural properties that tell the dynamic story of centuries of life in the region. The locations that we monitor change as conditions on the ground change. Our site inventory is the result of extensive consultations with our partners, who share our concern for heritage preservation in the South Caucasus. Our partners are fundamental to what we do, providing expertise, experience, and eyes on the ground.

Because the CHW team is composed of researchers with a long history of working in Armenia, thus far our partners are Yerevan-based. We welcome new partnerships with specialists in Azerbaijan who support our mission and wish to assist in this work.

At present, our monitoring is focused on the hundreds of Armenian historical monuments that now fall under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction following the November 2020 ceasefire. As our historical investigation of cultural erasure in the Azerbaijani province of Nakhchivan clearly demonstrates, Armenian monuments are currently at the most risk. This assessment is bolstered by explicit threats against cultural heritage sites issued by Azerbaijani officials, from the President and Minister of Culture to the Chairman of the Union of Architects.

CHW's monitoring effort is specifically focused on heritage monuments. It is not within our mission to document the wider destruction of towns, villages, and cities over the 30 years of conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. We focus on historic sites that have been the subject of archaeological, architectural, or art historical research and are included on Soviet or post-Soviet state inventories of cultural properties.

But it is important to note that we see the wider, heart-breaking destruction that has impacted the lives of so many Azerbaijani and Armenian families. We deplore the combination of violence and poverty that has created Nagorno-Karabakh's ravaged landscape. And we surveil these areas with a deep sense of empathy for the lives lost and futures upended. Nevertheless, we draw a distinction between the destruction and abandonment of villages over the course of this long-standing conflict and the systematic attempts to eradicate heritage properties as a means to erase communities from the region's past and thus rewrite the region's history. It is our hope that in the years we study this region we will see it bloom with new hope and a lasting peace.

There are some kinds of threats to cultural heritage that CHW is not well-equipped to address. Satellite imagery provides evidence of damage or destruction, but it cannot detect acts of desecration or directly combat heritage appropriation. Since the 2020 ceasefire, representatives of Azerbaijan's government have embarked on an extensive campaign to claim Armenian heritage sites as either non-existent or as "Caucasian Albanian". Both represent fraudulent historical claims unsupported by international research. The vast majority of experts in the region's art, architecture, and archaeology have all rejected Azerbaijan's revisionist claims as patently false. Nevertheless, the Caucasian Albanian propaganda has sparked some iconoclastic efforts to erase Armenian imagery and inscriptions from buildings and monuments. We are aware of these threats and track them via social media, but as these subtle but significant forms of erasure are not visible from our satellite imagery, we will have to rely on partners to document such abuses.

Archival Research

CHW recognizes that the cultural heritage of the South Caucasus and neighboring Turkey has already been targets of multiple waves of damage and destruction in recent history. We are actively engaged in forensic research projects that work to document aspects of past episodes of abuse to cultural heritage using a wide range of source materials.

In a year-long forensic investigation, CHW used high resolution satellite imagery to document the fate of Armenian cultural heritage sites in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan (Arm. Nakhichevan). To summarize our main finding, CHW's research shows the complete destruction of 108 medieval and early modern monasteries, churches, and cemeteries between 1997 and 2011. This figure represents 98 percent of the Armenian cultural heritage sites we were able to locate and assess for this investigation. These findings provide, for the first time, conclusive forensic evidence that silent and systematic cultural erasure has been a feature of Azerbaijan's domestic ethnic policy.

The findings from this special investigation are available in two formats. Our Special Report, Silent Erasure: A Satellite Investigation of the Destruction of Armenian Cultural Heritage in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan, can be found in the Reports page of our website in both abridged (2.2 MB) and full (29 MB) versions. We have also produced an online platform that presents the visual evidence for each destroyed site in an interactive format called ArcGIS StoryMaps. The StoryMaps provide historical information about every site, photographs, geolocation, and a side-by-side comparison of satellite imagery demonstrating the monument as it stood, and its disappearance.

Our second Special Report will focus on the treatment of Azerbaijani heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh while under Armenian administration. By Azerbaijani heritage we mean mosques, mausolea, and historic cemeteries created and used by Turko-Iranian populations before what Harun Yilmaz (2013) describes as the coalescence of an Azerbaijani national identity, and which Azerbaijan today stewards as part of their patrimony. In the aftermath of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020, social media was filled with claims and counter claims regarding heritage abuse by both parties. Having documented Azerbaijan's total program of cultural erasure in Nakhchivan, we will provide a fully detailed assessment of the treatment of Azerbaijani heritage sites by the unrecognized Republic of Artsakh. Archival research necessarily proceeds at a slower pace than our more urgent monitoring of current threats.

We invite stakeholders to contact us for assistance with other projects in the South Caucasus and neighboring regions where historic satellite imagery can help document past abuses to cultural heritage.

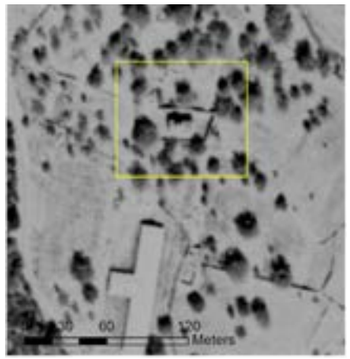


HOW WE **WORK**

Satellite Tasking

CHW documents changes in the built environment of cultural landscapes using high resolution satellite imagery. In order to monitor the condition of currently endangered sites, we task satellites to capture images throughout the year, providing a regularly updated stream of information on the physical integrity of cultural heritage in the region. We request imagery based on known or reported threats as well as our analysis of potential risks. Each site is examined by comparing recent captures to prior imagery in the CHW database.

Evidence for damage or destruction is passed from individual monitors to the team for group evaluation. If full agreement is reached, the site is flagged as either destroyed, damaged, or threatened. Consultations are held with our partners as the team works toward a strategic response. When CHW and its partners conclude that public scrutiny might blunt further intentional or accidental damage to a site or other sites in the vicinity, we use social media to broadcast the threat and to help focus the attention of relevant organizations, analysts, journalists and authorities. A GIS-powered dashboard on our website provides a summary of our current understanding of damaged and destroyed sites, as well as those that may be at elevated risk due to changes on the landscape. And at regular intervals during the year, we produce summary reports that document in greater detail evidence for impacts on cultural heritage, including findings of damage and threats beyond those reported on social media.



Archival Analysis

Methodologically, our archival work entails in-depth reseach using a wide range of sources, including Soviet maps, scholarly publications in all of the regional languages, state lists, repositories of declassified Cold War-era satellite imagery (e.g. KH-9 Hexagon), more recent satellite platforms like GoogleEarth, as well as archival and current photography. These sources make it possible to create a more complete documentary record of the condition of sites in the region than is currently available.

Making Our Findings Public

Our goal is not to simply document heritage destruction but to deter it; it is therefore important for our observations to be broadly disseminated. We have chosen Twitter (@CaucasusHW) and Facebook as platforms for broadcasting impact notices and threat alerts. These are meant to complement our regular reports by providing more timely assessments. Before we tweet, our threat alerts and damage assessments go through a series of protocols that require careful thought, consultation and evaluation. If a CHW monitor detects damage or an immediate potential threat, the full CHW team is notified. If the other team members verify the situation of concern, our next step is to consider what steps to take. A decision to push the issue to social media is taken only when CHW believes public scrutiny might ameliorate the situation and/or spur public bodies to action, including journalists, multinational organizations, and civil society activists. If concerns emerge that publicity might make a situation worse, we reserve the observation for the next report. If we determine that public attention is merited, we then consult with our partner stakeholders, experts in the archaeology and architecture of the region, to seek their input on both our monitoring observation and publication plan. We then prepare the impact imagery from our archive and compose the written assessment for our report and/or social media.

WHY WE **DO THIS**

There are a number of reasons why we founded CHW. None of them are about partisanship in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We value the heritage of all communities. But we deplore and condemn heritage erasure and other deliberate abuses of tangible heritage. We seek to not only prevent destruction where we can but also clearly and soberly place responsibility where it belongs.

It might be naive to suggest that we can forestall heritage erasure once initiated; but by documenting events in something close to real time, we change the traditional form of narrating cultural erasure. Forensic accounts of cultural erasure are typically elegies of loss, where accountability is clouded by distortions of the historical record by those in power. By doing the forensic work in real time, we are sounding an alarm rather than writing an elegy. And where possible, we are assigning culpability directly rather than diffusely.

To acknowledge cultural erasure in both Turkey and Nakhchivan/Nakhichevan is not to be partisan. It is to state historical facts corroborated by the preponderance of evidence. Where we are unsure, we will say so. Where the images clearly demonstrate, we will say so. Where we simply don't know, we will say so.

Past damage to cultural heritage does not justify or excuse current or future attacks. CHW does not condone assaults on cultural heritage past or present by either party in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. And we strongly reject the immoral logic of "what about-ism" that seeks to justify damage today by pointing to episodes of destruction in the past. Our goal is to break the cycle of endless recrimination by recognizing past destruction but also keeping a watchful eye on the present. Only through regular, publicly visible surveillance can we hope to clearly establish accountability and ultimately take the region's heritage off of the front lines of the conflict.

Summary Assessment

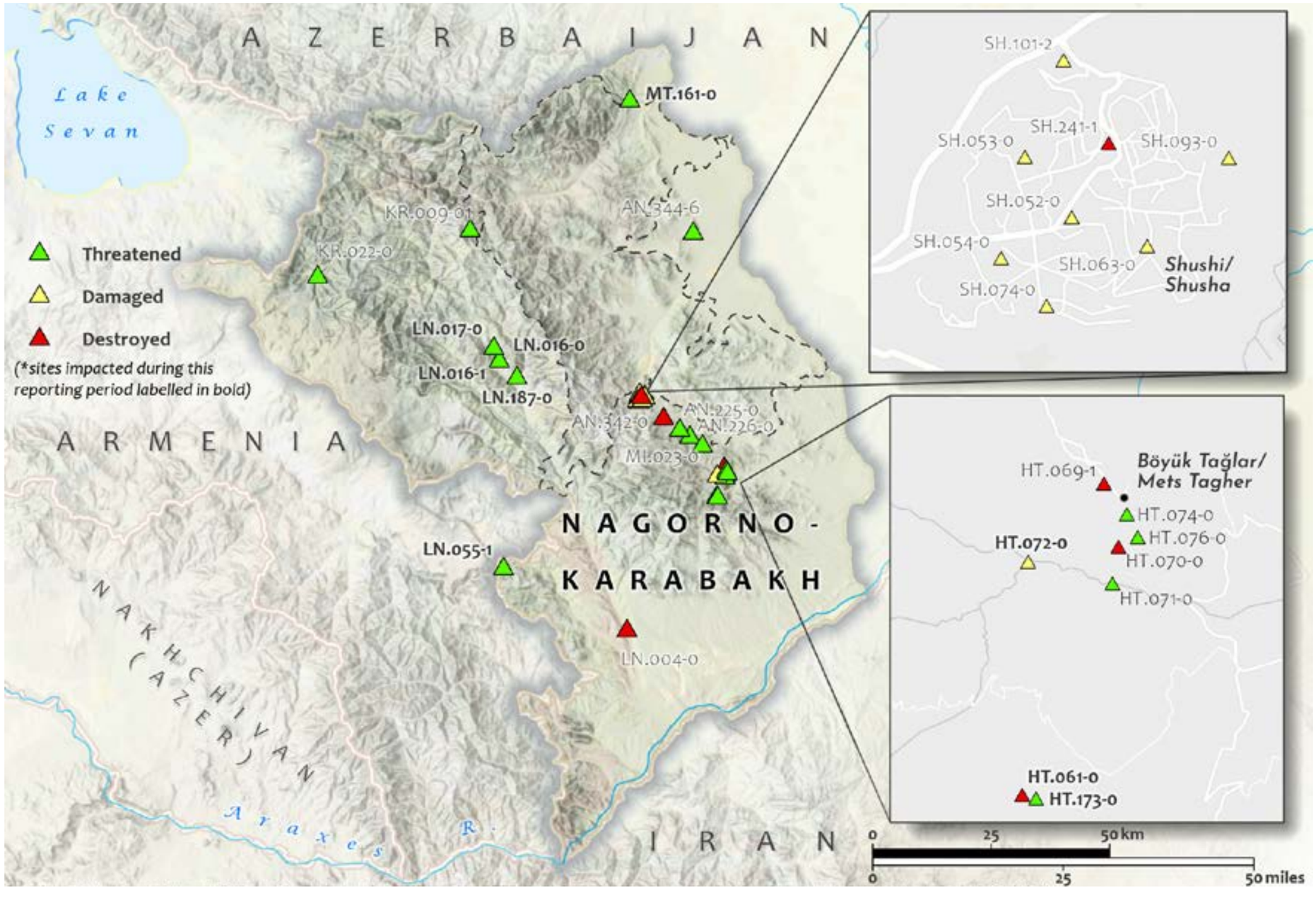
IMPACTED **SITES**

Overall, our spring and summer 2022 monitoring documented a worrying spike in threats to cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh. A newly destroyed church (HT.061-0) and a bridge that appears to at least be damaged (HT.072-0) were joined on our impact list by seven newly threatened sites.

Perhaps most troubling is the broadening geographic extent of sites at risk. Where prior impacts had clustered around the Fizuli-Shusha road, and within Shusha itself, we now see threats to cultural heritage emerging across Nagorno-Karabakh. In particular, a flurry of activity in the Lachin/Berdzor region has put several sites at risk.

For the moment, road construction remains the number one concern for cultural heritage preservation in the region. Too many sites have been demolished or threatened in the course of road-building, with bulldozers carelessly approaching fragile, centuries old structures. However, the destruction of Susanlyg/ Mokhrenes village, and St. Sargis church in particular, raises new areas of concern. The destruction does not appear to be part of a planned program of road construction and so appears instead to be an indiscriminate act of demolition. Should we see an increase in such activities, it could threaten a wide range of heritage sites in the region, including not only Armenian churches and cemeteries but also Islamic and Azerbaijani places of memory, worship, and history.

For the moment, threatened heritage sites remain more numerous than sites destroyed or damaged, and we hope it remains that way. Since CHW began its monitoring program, we have documented 30 impacted sites (threatened, destroyed, or damaged). This represents almost 10% of the corpus of sites we monitor in just two years since the end of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. It is our hope that Azerbaijan's authorities will implement measures to protect and preserve Armenian monuments and cemeteries that are located in the vicinity of road construction and other development work, in accordance with national laws and best practices in cultural resource management.



Destroyed Heritage

HT.061-0	St. Sargis Church (Mokhrenes/Susanlyg)
Dates	Constructed in the 18th or 19th century.
Baseline Images	2021-10-22 and 2022-03-05 / SkySat
Monitoring Image	2022-07-06 / SkySat
Current Status	Destroyed
Notes	Between March and July 2022, an episode of destruction took place in the village of Mokhrenes/Susanlyg. Many of the structures of the village were reduced to rubble, among them the historic St. Sargis church. The church and surrounding buildings are clearly visible in an Oct. 2021 satellite image. In the March image, the church is difficult to distinguish from ground surface due to roof vegetation. But the roof ridge can be seen and the surrounding village is intact. By July 6, the widespread devastation of the village is clearly visible. This church was in active use before the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. St. Sargis is appropriated as an "Albanian Temple" in the Azerbaijan monument list under entry #232.
Image Credit	Images below courtesy of Monument Watch and Research on Armenian Architecture
Media	CHW first announced the destruction of St. Sargis on social media on September 12. That same day, it was reported in the Cornell Chronicle. The news of the destruction also appeared in Hyperallergic on September 16.
Citation	Monument Watch has an entry about St. Sargis.







Damaged Heritage

HT.072-0	Halevor Bridge
Dates	Built 1835
Baseline Images	2021-10-22 and 2022-03-05 / SkySat
Monitoring Image	2022-07-06 / SkySat
Current Status	Damaged
Notes	Halevor bridge spans the Ishkhanaget/Quruçay river 2km southwest of Boyuk Taghler/Mets Tagher. While it is difficult to assess the precise condition of the historic Halevor bridge, satellite imagery shows significant construction activity immediately adjacent to the bridge between March and July. It appears that a new bridge either abuts or has taken the place of the old. Provisionally, CHW deems this bridge as damaged, but it may be destroyed. We will reassess our designation in a future monitoring cycle, when construction in the area is complete.
Image Credit	Photos below courtesy of Monument Watch.
Citation	To learn more about Halevor bridge, including existing scholarship and a translation of the 7-line Armenian inscription, see the site entry on the Monument Watch website.









Threatened Heritage

HT.173-0	HT.173-0. Mokhrenes/Susanlyg Cemetery
Dates	19th century
Baseline Images	2021-10-22 and 2022-03-05 / SkySat
Monitoring Image	2022-07-06 / SkySat
Current Status	Threatened
Notes	The 19th century cemetery at the eastern edge of the village of Mokhrenes/Susanlyg appears largely intact, despite the widespread destruction of the village (see entry above for St. Sargis church). The reach of the destruction extends just to base of the hill on which the cemetery is located. Given the apparent targeting of Mokhrenes for demolition, the historic cemetery is designated as threatened.
Image Credit	Screenshot from YouTube video uploaded by Albert Voskanyan at link below.
Citation	The cemetery appears in this video, where 19th century tombstones with Armenian inscriptions are clearly visible.







Threatened Heritage

LN.016-0 & -1	Arakhish/Arikli Church and Cemetery
Dates	There is no construction date for the medieval church but the cemetery contains cross-stones (khachkars) dated to the 12th-16th centuries.
Baseline Image	2021-10-11 / SkySat
Monitoring Image	2022-07-11 / SkySat
Current Status	Threatened
Notes	Between October and July, satellite imagery shows extensive new earthmoving and road construction activity immediately to the northeast of the church and its adjacent cemetery.
Image Credit	Photos below courtesy of Monument Watch.
Citation	To learn more about the Arakhish church, see the site entry on the Monument Watch website.







Threatened Heritage

LN.017-0	Zorakhach' Church (Arikli/Arakhish)
Dates	The construction date of the church is not known, but gravestones of the 16th and 17th centuries were re-used in its construction, providing a *terminus post quem* for the building.
Baseline Images	2021-10-10 and 2022-03-25 / SkySat
Monitoring Image	2022-07-12 / SkySat
Current Status	Threatened
Notes	The historic Zorakhach' Church sits adjacent to an extensive earth moving operation along a new road project. Satellite imagery shows the encroachment of the roadwork between March and July. CHW is concerned about the safety of this historic structure.
Image Credit	Photos below courtesy of Monument Watch.
Citation	To learn more about Zorakhach' Church, see site entry on Monument Watch's website.









Threatened Heritage

LN.187-0	Vakunis Church (Pichenis)
Dates	Based on the architecture of the structure and the khachkars and gravestones embedded in its walls, Monument Watch dates the church to the 17th century.
Baseline Image	2021-10-11 / SkySat
Monitoring Image	2022-07-11 / SkySat
Current Status	Threatened
Notes	The ruins of the Vakunis Church are greatly endangered by roadwork immediately adjacent to the eastern wall of the church, where the altar and vestries are located.
Image Credit	Photos below courtesy of Monument Watch.
Citation	To learn more about Vakunis Church, see the site entry on the Monument Watch website.









Threatened Heritage

MT.161-0	St. Yeghisha Church (Mataghis/Suqovuşan)
Dates	Construction completed in 1898.
Baseline Image	2021-10-21 / SkySat
Monitoring Image	2022-07-11 / SkySat
Current Status	Threatened
Notes	Satellite imagery shows earthmoving immediately to the east and north of the church between October and 2021 and July 2022.
Image Credit	Photos below courtesy of Monument Watch.
Alerts	CHW released a social media alert on July 25, 2022.
Citation	To learn more about St. Yeghisha Church, see the site entry on the Monument Watch website.







On September 12, 2022, CHW released Special Report #1 entitled Silent Erasure: A Satellite Investigation of Armenian Cultural Heritage in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan. In addition to our report, we released an interactive StoryMap platform that allows users to explore all of the sites that we documented as erased.

Our special report has been covered extensively in a range of media outlets, including Hyperallergic, Le Journal des Arts, Golos Armenii, and Art Review. An article about our analysis published by the Cornell Chronicle was also reposted by several organizations, including Genocide Watch.

As a public facing monitoring organization, we welcome media inquiries. Please contact us at chw@cornell.edu.

IMAGE CREDITS

Except where noted at right and in the text, images are from SkySat captures of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The CHW logo and website were designed by Garen Harboyan & CodOptix.

Page	Scene	Source
Cover	Satellite view of the destroyed remains of St. Sargis Church in Mokhrenes/Susanlyg (see HT.061-0).	SkySat, July 6, 2022.
3	Photo of Yeghishe Arakyal Monastery, near Mokhrenes/ Susanlyg.	Credit: haykmelkonyan. Wikimedia Commons licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license. No changes were made to the image.
5-6 & 19-20	Regional Map	©CHW 2022.
7	The "Praven-Kamurj" Bridge	Credit: Monument Watch.
9-10, 12	Satellite Imagery	SkySat. October 2021 ©CHW 2022.
15, 18	SkySat Mosaic July 2021	©CHW 2022.

Land Acknowledgements:

Cornell University is located on the traditional homelands of the Gayogohó:no' (the Cayuga Nation). The Gayogohó:no' are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign nations with a historic and contemporary presence on this land. The confederacy precedes the establishment of Cornell University, New York state and the United States of America. We acknowledge the painful history of Gayogohó:no' dispossession, and honor the ongoing connection of Gayogohó:no' people, past and present, to these lands and waters.

We acknowledge Purdue University is located on the traditional homelands of the Woodland People. We honor and appreciate these indigenous caretakers, which include the Bodéwadmik (Potawatomi), Lenape (Delaware), Myaamia (Miami), and Shawnee People.

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