

Senior Israel Delegation Visits Azerbaijan Two Days Before Clashes in Karabakh

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*Director General of Israeli Defence Ministry, **Eyal Zamir**, visited Azerbaijan two days before clashes erupted with Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, Israeli media reported on Wednesday.*

Members of the Israeli delegation met with their Azeri counterparts, including Defence Minister, **Zakir Hasanov**, *The Times of Israel* said, pointing out that the visit came amid stepped-up Israeli arms supplies to Azerbaijan.

At least 32 people had been killed in the region before the clashes stopped. Azerbaijan described its attacks as an "anti-terrorist operation".

It said it would continue until the separatist government of Nagorno-Karabakh dismantles itself and "illegal Armenian military formations" surrender.

On Wednesday, the two sides announced a ceasefire.

Israel is expanding bilateral ties with Azerbaijan. In March, Azeri Foreign Minister, **Jeyhun Bayramov**, opened Baku's first-ever embassy in Israel.

Israel is one of Azerbaijan's leading arms suppliers. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Israel provided 69 per cent of Baku's major arms imports in 2016-2020, accounting for 17 per cent of Israel's arms exports over that period.

During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Israel stepped up its weapons shipments to Azerbaijan, which emerged victorious in that war with Armenia.

Israel gets benefits from its relations with Azerbaijan through its location on Iran's northern border and the fact that Israel buys over 30 per cent of its oil from Baku.

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Featured image: A screen grab captured from a video shows smoke rising after Azerbaijan started "anti-terror activities" in Karabakh to uphold the provisions outlined in the 2020 trilateral peace agreement it signed with Russia and Armenia, on September 19, 2023 [Stringer – Anadolu Agency]

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