



DELEGATION PERMANENTE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE D'ARMÉNIE AUPRES DE L'UNESCO

9 November 2020

Dear Mr. Assistant Director-General,

I am writing to you regarding the nomination file submitted by Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey and Uzbekistan proposing the Art of miniature for inscription on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In Section D of the nomination, which specifies the geographical location and range of the element, Azerbaijan has identified the presence of a miniature art school inside Karabakh, among other areas.

If by mentioning Karabakh Azerbaijan meant Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), it will be treated as another attempt by this country to weaponize the Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists and drag UNESCO into its malicious political agenda.

In order to prevent another possible attempt of Azerbaijan to politicize the Intangible Cultural List and to avoid any possible confusion, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

Azerbaijan has failed to uphold scientific and methodological rigour in this nomination. Experts have confirmed that Nagorno-Karabakh does not host, nor has ever hosted, an Azerbaijani miniature art school. Firstly, the miniature of Artsakh has fundamental thematic differences and is not influenced by any other culture. Second, the main characteristic of Artsakh miniature painting is its figurative-pictorial nature with strongly emphasized Christian elements; therefore, the possibility of other influences on this visual art can be discounted, especially since the thematic-artistic means of its reproduction are quite obviously Armenian and Christian. Third, the miniature painting of Artsakh is a Christian pictorial culture, which is characterized by the presence of Armenian letters, allegorical characters, and symbols such as crosses and various Christian religious objects, accessories, and vestments.

The countless holy illustrations and portraits of evangelists, altars, ornaments, headdresses, and margents found in the manuscripts illustrated or replicated by the Nagorno-Karabakh school of miniature stand out with their originality and expressiveness. Miniature painting flourished in Artsakh in the 13th-15th centuries. A large number of manuscripts were collected in the monasteries of Artsakh from different collections of Armenian princes or monks, such as the "Red Gospel" (909 C.E.), the 11th-century "Begyunts Gospel", the Gospel of Hromkla (1166 C.E.), and the "Gospel of Haghpat" (1211 C.E.), and more. Several Gospels created in Artsakh between 1224-1261 (including the Vanenu Gospel, manuscript № 4823, and the Gospel of Vakhtang Tangik and his wife Khorishah, manuscript № 378, both found in Matenadaran) are distinguished by well-produced parchment, the linear style of miniatures, the subtlety of gold and the colors, and the unique compositional interpretations. In the Artsakh school of miniature art, a new and rare version of the Gospel illustration was created. Therefore, the claim that there was an Azerbaijani miniature art school in Artsakh is wholly unsubstantiated.

**Mr. Ernesto OTTONE RAMIREZ**

**Assistant Director-General for Culture**

**UNESCO**

It is also important to consult the bearers and practitioners of the element who are responsible for the practice and transmission of the element. Neither the people of Nagorno-Karabakh nor its elected authorities have been consulted in this process, which further challenges the legitimacy of the claim that an Azerbaijani miniature art school is located inside Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia reiterates its principal position on the unacceptability of misusing the platform of the UNESCO to promote any conflict-related perceptions.

UNESCO was founded on the understanding that peace must be built upon dialogue, mutual understanding, and the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity. Azerbaijan has rejected this basic notion, pursuing the military route instead, flagrantly violating the vision and mission of UNESCO. Fanning the flame further, Azerbaijan is now attempting to drag UNESCO into its narrow-minded political agenda.

The UNESCO platform was created to strengthen bonds among nations through the promotion of cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures; under no circumstances should it become a tool for state propaganda. Nevertheless, by claiming the existence of an Azerbaijani miniature art school inside Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan is resorting to fabrications and falsehoods to propagate its policy of aggression, blatantly disregarding the basic values on which UNESCO was built. This action, which makes an explicit reference to the name of the area of the ongoing war that Azerbaijan unleashed against Nagorno-Karabakh since September 27, 2020, goes along with the Azerbaijani policy of misusing and abusing international fora to distort facts on the ground about Nagorno-Karabakh. Intangible cultural heritage must be safeguarded from such manipulation, appropriation, and politicization. Azerbaijan's actions threaten the integrity of not only intangible cultural heritage but for the organization as a whole.

Dear Mr. Assistant Director-General,

For all the reasons stated above, you will understand the importance of specifying the geographical area that applies to this element, in the absence of which we have to conclude that this nomination contains politicized and highly sensitive sections, which will result in future ungrounded, false, inappropriate, and political implementation reports, as it was the case with one of the previous reports, further complicating UNESCO's agenda.

We would highly appreciate your assistance in forwarding this letter to the Evaluation body and the members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Sincerely,



Christian TER STEPANIAN

Ambassador, Permanent Delegate