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Karabakh Eyes Making Russian an Official Language

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The disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh has long been a point of geopolitical and ethnic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. **Alexander Ryumin / TASS**

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The unrecognized republic of Nagorno-Karabakh has introduced a bill to add Russian as an official language alongside Armenian, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported Wednesday.

The bill follows a recent Russia-brokered peace deal that saw Azerbaijan regain most of its former territories in the region, including the strategic city of Shusha, from Armenian control. Nearly 2,000 Russian peacekeepers were deployed to Nagorno-Karabakh for a renewable five-year mandate under the deal.

In an explanatory note on the reasons for introducing the draft bill, its authors cited "cultural, military and economic relations" between Nagorno-Karabakh and Russia, historical memory

and the fact that many residents already speak Russian as their second language.

“The long-term presence of Russian peacekeepers in Artsakh; the awareness of the need to jointly solve numerous social and communication problems; and cooperation in the areas of construction, healthcare, education, and science require a reassessment of the role of the Russian language," RIA Novosti quoted the document submitted to the National Assembly as saying.

The disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh has long been a point of geopolitical and ethnic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with a deadly six-week war breaking out in the region in September 2020.

The latest conflict came amid a decades-long dispute over Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian region that broke away from Azerbaijan during a war in the 1990s when borders were redrawn following the Soviet collapse.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has called for stronger ties with Russia while Azerbaijan aligned itself with Turkey during the latest fighting.

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