

Russia Says Armenians Added 'Fuel to Fire' in Azerbaijan Conflict

By [AFP](#)

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Sergei Savostyanov / TASS

Russia's top diplomat on Saturday accused Armenian leaders of worsening tensions but voiced hope the country would stay in Moscow's orbit following furor over Azerbaijan's recapture of the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh enclave.

Speaking at the United Nations, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov charged that Western powers were "pulling the strings" to undermine Russian influence but added, "unfortunately, the leadership of Armenia from time to time adds fuel to the fire itself."

Russian peacekeepers were deployed after a previous round of fighting in 2020 to monitor a ceasefire around Nagorno-Karabakh, which was run by ethnic Armenian separatists for decades.

Azerbaijani forces nonetheless swiftly seized the mountainous territory on Tuesday, despite

earlier appeals by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to the Kremlin to do more.

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Protesters have rallied outside Russia's embassy in Yerevan, with some Armenians accusing Moscow of being distracted by its war in Ukraine.

Lavrov pointed to one senior Armenian politician who said that Russian President Vladimir Putin had handed Nagorno-Karabakh over to Azerbaijan following the 2020 fighting.

"It is ludicrous to accuse us of this," Lavrov said.

"There is a great number of similar politicians with a similar background there, but we are convinced that the Armenian people remember their history," he said.

He voiced confidence that Armenians would remain linked to "Russia and other friendly states in the region rather than those who swoop in from abroad."

A declaration signed in 1991 in Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty stated that existing borders of newly independent countries that had been Soviet republics were inviolable.

The declaration "meant that Nagorno-Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan — pure and simple as that," Lavrov said.

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