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Azerbaijan Threatens Russian State Media Over Use of Karabakh Capital's Armenian Name

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The head office of TASS in Moscow. **Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry on Friday warned that it could take action against Russian state media for referring to the capital of the former breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh by its Armenian name.

Ministry spokesperson Aykhan Hajizada accused Russia's state-run TASS news agency of "disrespecting and insulting" Azerbaijan by using the name Stepanakert instead of Khankendi, the Azerbaijani name for the Karabakh capital.

Baku regained full control of Nagorno-Karabakh following a military offensive in 2023, during which the region's Armenian-majority population was forced to flee.

Hajizada singled out a TASS report published Thursday about the removal of a bust of Ivan Aivazovsky, a renowned Russian painter of Armenian origin. He claimed the monument had

been “illegally” installed by Russian peacekeepers in what he called “a clear manifestation of disrespect” toward Azerbaijan.

“We expect an apology and an appropriate correction from the TASS news agency on this matter. Otherwise, in accordance with the law, relevant measures will be taken regarding TASS’s operations in Azerbaijan,” Hajizada said.

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As of Friday afternoon, the TASS article had replaced references to “Stepanakert” with “Nagorno-Karabakh” but made no note of the changes.

Russian authorities have not yet responded to Baku’s statement.

The warning comes amid rising tensions between Azerbaijan and Russia following the deaths of two Azerbaijani men during mass arrests in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg in late June. Azerbaijani officials accused Russian police of torturing and murdering the men.

In response, Baku has canceled Russia-linked cultural events, raided the local offices of the Kremlin-funded Sputnik news outlet and arrested several Russian nationals it accused of organized crime.

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