

Azerbaijan 2001: Muddling Through, (an abstract) SOCIAL ISSUES: FIGHTING TERRORISM, FORGETTING CORRUPTION

Country report on Azerbaijan 2001

the Annual Survey 2001, Transitions Online

[Svante E. Cornell](#)

ANNOTATION:

This document contains an abstract SOCIAL ISSUES: FIGHTING TERRORISM, FORGETTING CORRUPTION of the country report on Azerbaijan 2001 from the Annual Survey 2001, the most complete guide to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the former Soviet Union, prepared by Prague based Transitions Online. Please see more details of the survey on www.tol.cz.

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SOCIAL ISSUES: FIGHTING TERRORISM, FORGETTING CORRUPTION

Throughout 2001, and particularly after the 11 September terrorist attacks against the United States, religion was the government's main social concern. It moved to tighten the regulation of religious organizations, forcing all religious institutions, foreign and domestic, to re-register. It seized a number of foreign Islamic activists, including several members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which was thought to have effectively merged with the Al Qaeda terrorist network. The government also continued to restrict the activities of the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan, which it alleged was funded and supported by Iran.

The government's efforts to constrain religious radicalism were not limited to Islamic groups. It also tried to control and limit the activities of Christian missionary organizations, which often circumvent the law by cloaking their activities as humanitarian, and are especially active in the rural regions of the country.

For both foreign investors and the Azeri public, one of the most critical social problems in Azerbaijan is corruption. Transparency International regularly rates Azerbaijan as one of the most corrupt of the roughly 90 countries it surveys. Though the ranking only measures international perceptions, surveys of the actual incidence of corruption show similar results. A United Nations study found that an estimated 19 percent of Baku's population had had personal

experience of corruption. This put Baku fifth among the capitals studied; most post-communist countries had rates of between 10 and 20 percent.

A similar study, by the World Bank, found Azerbaijan to be the post-communist country most affected by 'state capture,' indicating that special interest groups had a major influence on government policy and shaped rules and policies to their advantage. (Moldova, Ukraine and Russia came in close behind.) Forty percent of businesses said they have been directly affected by illicit private influence on state institutions. The oil boom has merely fueled corruption.

NGOs continued to have little influence on public policy. Public awareness of the workings of the NGO sector was poor, and Azeri NGOs were overly dependent on foreign grants. Civil society therefore continued to grow only slowly, though there was some modest progress.

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