

Hi Zahava,

Shana Tova! It's a pleasure to introduce myself. I used to be the editor of JNS. Tuly sent me your contact information for article submissions to Israel365 News.

For those in search of some uplifting news these days, today I'm submitting the attached (and below) opinion submission on coexistence between religions in Azerbaijan. The prominent video blogger Nas Daily recently brought renewed attention to that topic through this clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBGgA33z-RQ>

My oped also contrasts the environment in Azerbaijan with the culture of antisemitism in Armenia, including from the Armenian neo-Nazi movement Hosank, which promotes the "Armenian Aryan ideas" espoused by Nazi collaborator Garegin Nzhdeh.

I believe there's relevant content for Jewish and Christian readers alike here. Please let me know if Israel365 News is interested in running this oped, and thanks so much either way for your time and consideration!

All the best,

Jacob Kamaras

In a time of war, Azerbaijan provides hope that coexistence is possible

By Jacob Kamaras

With a new year underway on the Hebrew calendar, Israel is waging a multi-front war, and the trauma of the October 7 massacre remains all too raw. It leaves supporters of Israel around the world searching for a ray of hope.

The millions who follow the Arab-Israeli internet sensation, vlogger Nuseir Yasin (Nas Daily), discovered precisely that modicum of hope last month when he released "The Country of Coexistence" — a [video](#) he recorded in the South Caucasus nation of Azerbaijan together with author Aija Mayrock.

"I am Jewish. I am Muslim," Mayrock and Nas Daily declared one after the other, "and we just arrived in a country that likes both of us."

Yasin and Mayrock described how in a conflict-riddled region — and sharing borders with Iran and Russia — Azerbaijan defies the odds, with its 30,000 Jews and 10 million Muslims living alongside one another in peace. In fact, they have done so for thousands of years. It is home to the Red Village (Krasnaya Sloboda), believed to be the world's only all-Jewish town outside of Israel and the U.S., and the historic home of the Mountain Jews.

In the heart of the capital of Baku, the vlogger and author witnessed mosques, churches, and synagogues right next to each other, with the rare occurrence of Shi'a and Sunni Muslims sharing the same mosque and same prayers. They visited a church built by an Azerbaijani Muslim, and a Jewish school that was opened by Azerbaijan's president himself. "In the churches, Muslims and Jews come to celebrate local holidays with their fellow Christians," Nas Daily noted.

For the vlogger, it begged the question: “Why do you think this is happening in this country?” He agreed with Mayrock that such coexistence does not happen organically but rather, “there’s an encouragement that people should get along.” Azerbaijan has a Ministry for Religious Affairs, a full government building dedicated to interreligious affairs, and a constitution that stipulates separate of religion and state as well as the equality of all religions before the law.

Nas Daily also commented on the significance of Azerbaijan’s location along the Silk Road. “You have to be open to new ideas and new religions and new people, passing by for thousands of years, so you become more tolerant to new people that are different from you.” He added, “I think that’s really what I like the most about this country, [it] is if you’re extremist in your thoughts, or your actions or your ideas, then there’s no space for that. Coexistence requires compromise. All of us need to compromise so that we can live together.”

Yet just like Israelis who are mired in the seemingly endless conflict with the Palestinians, Azerbaijanis are still striving for an enduring peace with their neighbors in Armenia — despite liberating the formerly Armenian-occupied territory of Karabakh during rounds of conflict in 2020 and 2023. On September 26, after holding a trilateral meeting with the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers at the U.N. General Assembly, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [expressed hope](#) that they made progress “toward a durable and dignified peace” that “would bring increased stability and prosperity to the region.”

But to understand the obstacles that Azerbaijan is facing in this process, it is critical to be aware of exactly who Baku is dealing with — an Armenian population plagued by the hatred and anger of individuals such as Hayk Nazaryan, the California-based leader of Hosank, a virulently antisemitic movement. Hosank [describes its mission](#) as the promotion of “Armenian Aryan ideas” — specifically those espoused by [Nazi collaborator Garegin Nzhdeh](#), who is a national hero in Armenia and glorified through a monument in the capital of Yerevan, a statue in Gyumri, and streets in nearly 20 municipalities.

Nazaryan posted October 1 on X that “rising unemployment and poverty even in ‘civilized’ countries” is the result of a “vile Judaic system.” (His X account has since been suspended.) On the same day — coinciding with Iran’s ballistic missile attack against Israel, and the start of the Israeli ground operation in Lebanon — [a post on the Hosank website](#) stated that “the terrorist country full of rats called Israel attacked and invaded Lebanon. Israel is simply a virus state that feeds off chaos.” Several weeks earlier, Nazaryan blamed Jews and the Israeli Mossad for the September 11 attacks.

Notably, Armenia is a country where antisemitic attitudes permeate mainstream society, extending beyond the fringe and radical voices like Nazaryan and his Hosank movement. [According to the Anti-Defamation League](#), 58% of the Armenian population agrees with antisemitic stereotypes — an even higher rate than the Iranian population (56%).

The U.S. should call out the rampant antisemitism in Armenia. Instead of doing so, some members of Congress turn a blind eye to the problem and call Armenia “a democratic and strategic partner,” an approach that is inconsistent with the goal of combating antisemitism.

In a sharp contrast, Azerbaijan is a Muslim-majority nation where there are no reports of antisemitism. This should provide hope, then, that at least one side in the South Caucasus negotiations has the DNA of a true peace partner.

After all, as Nas Daily and Mayrock affirmed in their video, “We are leaving Azerbaijan excited, because coexistence is possible.”

Jacob Kamaras is the former editor-in-chief of the Jewish News Syndicate and the founder of Stellar Jay Communications, a PR firm representing Azerbaijan.