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## ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN TAKE NEW STEP TOWARDS FINALIZING PEACE DEAL

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Armenia and Azerbaijan have succeeded in removing one major obstacle, but large potholes remain on the road to a durable peace deal between the longtime enemies.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry confirmed in early August that Azerbaijani officials had agreed to drop a provision from a draft peace agreement that would give Baku a land corridor connecting the Nakhchivan exclave to Azerbaijan proper. The matter of extraterritorial rights for Azerbaijan concerning what is known as the Zangezur corridor had been a sticking point in ongoing peace negotiations. The news that Baku was dropping the Zangezur provision was first reported by RFE/RL. Azerbaijani officials have stated the issue could potentially be revived at a later date, when conditions are more favorable for mutual agreement.

The announcement indicates renewed movement in the peace process, which in recent months appeared stalled. It also was evidently the outcome of direct talks between representatives of the two states. Previously, peace negotiations had been brokered by outside powers, including Russia, the United States, France and Germany.

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