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## **PUTIN SEEKS TURKEY'S HAND IN SETTLING KARABAKH CONFLICT THROUGH MINSK GROUP**

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that Armenia and Azerbaijan should resolve the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group, and should also include Turkey.

Speaking at the VTB Capital Russia Calling! Investment Forum in Moscow on Thursday, Putin said the settlement in the region will be possible when the conflicting parties find a "balance of interests."

Relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan have been tense since 1991 but fresh clashes broke out on September 27 over Nagorno-Karabakh, a region recognised internationally as part of Azerbaijan.

"At the first stage, we need to stop fighting, stop the loss of life, sit down at the negotiating table and find a consensus and balance of interests based on the proposals formulated by the Minsk group and its co-chairs – Russia, the US, and France – along with the participation of other members, including Turkey and a number of European states," Putin said.

Since the clashes began in late September, the Armenian army has continued its attacks on civilians and Azerbaijani forces, even violating humanitarian ceasefire agreements.

Turkey has repeatedly supported Azerbaijan's right to self-defence, and demanded a withdrawal of the occupying forces. Multiple UN resolutions also call for an immediate, and unconditional withdrawal of the invading forces.

The OSCE Minsk Group was formed in 1992 to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, but to no avail.

The Russian leader said a long-term settlement cannot be simple since each of the parties has "its own truth."

"The goal is to find a balance of interests that would suit both sides: both the Azerbaijani people, whom we treat with unwavering respect, and the interests of the Armenian people, and the state of Armenia," he said. "To make people feel safe, but at the same time create opportunities [...] for the development of both Azerbaijan and Armenia, and of Nagorno-Karabakh itself."

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