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# DİPLOMATİYA ALƏMİ

## WORLD OF DIPLOMACY

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Special Edition



DIPLOMACY OF AZERBAIJAN  
before / during / after

# 44-DAY WAR



DIPLOMACY OF AZERBAIJAN

before / during / after

44-DAY  
WAR

COMPILATION OF DOCUMENTS  
(JULY 2020 - SEPTEMBER 2021)

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## INTRODUCTION

The present special edition of the "World of Diplomacy" is a collection of statements, interviews, letters and other documents covering the diplomatic activity of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the eve of, during and in the aftermath of the 44-Day War that took place from September 27, 2020 to November 9, 2020.

The release of the collection marks the first anniversary since the end of the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan that lasted almost for three decades. It intends to reflect the consistent efforts of the Republic of Azerbaijan to achieve the peaceful resolution of the conflict. These documents also contain Azerbaijan's vision of the future of the region following the end of conflict, including on the issues related to good neighbourhood relations, opening of communications and reconciliation as well as post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration activities.

One should note that the Azerbaijani side has consistently underlined that armed aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan and its devastating consequences, including occupation of almost one fifth of Azerbaijan's territory and ethnic cleansing of all Azerbaijanis from the occupied areas, constitute a threat to peace and security. It has made it clear that the resolution of the conflict is possible only on the basis of the norms and principles of international law, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders. It has declared that Armenia should withdraw its armed forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and that the right of the forcibly displaced population to return to their homes in safety and dignity should be ensured.

The position of Azerbaijan enjoyed support of the international community, while Armenia ignored it and continued its military build-up, illegal economic and other activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including the transfer of mercenaries and foreign terrorist fighters to the occupied territories. In addition, during the last years of the conflict, Armenia has toughened rhetoric at the highest level, declaring the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan as part of Armenia, announcing "no inch of land" to be returned to Azerbaijan and defining the consolidation of the outcomes of its armed aggression against Azerbaijan as its strategic goal in the negotiation process.

The Azerbaijani side has been drawing attention of the international community to Armenia's provocations aimed at undermining the negotiations on the peaceful settlement of the conflict and at winning time for consolidation of results of occupation and ethnic cleansing with the aim of ultimate annexation of the Azerbaijani territories. In particular, Azerbaijan has been consistently requesting the OSCE Minsk Group and its Co-Chairmen from the USA, France and Russian Federation, to urge Armenia to refrain from its destructive actions and abusing the commitment of Azerbaijan on peaceful settlement of the conflict. In summer

of 2019, amidst the increased political-military provocations of Armenia, Azerbaijan once again brought to the notice of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group that the future of the peaceful negotiations resided in their ability, willingness and determination to respond promptly to Armenia's irresponsible behaviour. Unfortunately, no serious action was taken to stop Armenia.

As a result, the chain of provocative actions of Armenia ruined the negotiation process for the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Armenia, with its growing sense of impunity and based on its military doctrine envisaging "a new war for new territories", continued its military provocations and seriously escalated the situation in the frontline.

On September 27, 2020, it launched another act of aggression against Azerbaijan by intensively subjecting the positions of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan as well as the populated areas to fire with the use of large-calibre weapons, mortar launchers and artillery. The armed attack led to casualties among the civilians and military servicemen of Azerbaijan. Extensive damage was inflicted on many homes and other civilian infrastructure.

In response, the Republic of Azerbaijan, in exercise of its inherent right of self-defence, had to undertake the counter-offensive operation aimed at ensuring security of its civilian population and repulsing the threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Azerbaijan, in the course of the 44-day hostilities that were marked with its military superiority, continued to express its readiness to stop the military operation provided that Armenia withdraws its occupying troops from the territory of Azerbaijan. The President of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly called on Armenia to withdraw its armed forces back to the territory of Armenia thus preventing further military clashes and creating conditions for peace. In this context, one cannot but mention the observation by a foreign journalist that President of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev used 23 times the word "peace" during the military clashes, while the Armenian side did not do so even once.

However, Azerbaijan's calls were disregarded by Armenia which continued the bombardment of Azerbaijan's civilian settlements, including those located far from the conflict zone, in grave violation of international humanitarian law and humanitarian ceasefires agreed three times during the hostilities.

The successful counter-offensive operation resulted in liberation of a large part of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including the cities of Jabrayil, Hadrut, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadly and Shusha. The Statement of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation, signed on November 10, 2020, has put an end to the almost three-decade-long armed conflict. Implementation of the Statement ensured the de-occupation of the Aghdam, Lachyn and Kalbajar districts of Azerbaijan.

The territories of Azerbaijan liberated from the occupation revealed the horrific scale of devastation of these areas. For instance, in the cities of Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil and other places where Azerbaijani population before the occupation numbered dozens of thousands, practically all buildings and infrastructure were razed to the ground. The cultural heritage,

including mosques and other religious sites, museums and other cultural objects were destroyed, looted and desecrated.

The Azerbaijani side embarked upon rehabilitation and reconstruction of the liberated territories to ensure safe and dignified return of its displaced citizens to their places of origin. Azerbaijan stated its resolve to reintegrate all its conflict-affected population as equal citizens, on the basis of the Constitution, regardless of their ethnic, religious or any other affiliation.

The Azerbaijani side has stated that the end of the conflict offers a unique opportunity for consolidating peace and stability and paving the way for peaceful coexistence, development and mutually beneficial cooperation in the South Caucasus region. In line with this vision, Azerbaijan has proposed to Armenia to start negotiations on a peace agreement based on mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other. Azerbaijan's offer of peace agreement made despite the catastrophic consequences of Armenia's 30-year-long armed aggression has not yet been reciprocated by this country.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, under the leadership of President H.E. Mr. İlham Aliyev, comprehensively presented to international community its position on the events unfolding before, during and after the 44-Day War, by explaining their reasons and suggesting the actions needed to rectify the situation. In this context, President's statements, interviews and remarks are first in the line of materials included in the current issue of the journal.

The special edition covers the period from July 2020 to September 2021 and contains only a small piece of bulky materials, given the volume limitations.

Some materials are introduced with the excerpts. It was made to keep the focus on the topic of the special edition. To the extent that excerpts were made, it is so indicated in the titles of documents. Full texts may be retrieved from the following websites, as appropriate: [www.president.az](http://www.president.az) and [www.mfa.gov.az](http://www.mfa.gov.az). All materials in the journal are structured in chronologic order.

Minor editions were made to available English translations of the texts for clarity purposes.

It should be specifically noted that some of the documents are disclosed to public for the first time.

The special edition is issued to enrich understanding of the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the light of events leading to, during and following the 44-Day War.

## I. DIPLOMACY ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

### Excerpts from the remarks by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the meeting of the Security Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan

July 13, 2020



Yesterday afternoon, Armenia committed yet another military provocation in the direction of Tovuz on the Azerbaijan-Armenia border. This is not the first time Armenia has committed military provocations on the state border. As a result of these military provocations in the last few months, our servicemen, as well as civilians, have been killed. Several of our servicemen were killed as a result of another provocation yesterday afternoon. Artillery fire was opened at our military post, and as a result of this insidious act, our servicemen were killed and wounded. May Allah rest our martyrs in peace and send healing to our wounded soldiers.

I can say that yet another provocation of Armenia was resolutely prevented and adequately rebuffed. The death of our soldiers has been avenged. All the attempts of the Armenian side failed, Azerbaijan protected its state border and Armenian soldiers could not cross even an inch into Azerbaijani territory.

The situation on the border continues to be tense today. I was in touch with all relevant agencies and commanders last night. I was informed early this morning too that the situation on the border has not stabilized. All the responsibility lies squarely with the military-political leadership of Armenia. Such events occur because of the hypocritical and dishonest activities of the Armenian leadership. On the one hand, it appeals to the international community and asks for help in strengthening the ceasefire on the Armenian-Azerbaijani contact line. On the other, by committing military provocations it wants to invade the territory of Azerbaijan, seize our positions, fire on the civilian population and our villages. This ugly and insidious policy will lead Armenia to the abyss. All the responsibility falls on the leadership of Armenia. Azerbaijan will continue to protect its territorial integrity and borders. The crushing blows inflicted on the enemy yesterday afternoon and this night showed this once again. Our fallen servicemen have been avenged, their blood has not and will not remain on the ground.

Such ugly acts are a manifestation of their aggressive policy. It is impossible to explain this policy logically. Because this policy is very contradictory and poses a great threat to Armenia. I have said this many times and I want to say it again that Azerbaijan will never put up with the occupation of its occupied lands, will not put up with the occupation and will do its best to restore its territorial integrity.

Relevant appeals have been sent to international organizations, and as soon as the operational situation permits, we will invite foreign military representatives operating in Azerbaijan to the area so that they can see the situation with their own eyes. Let them see who committed this military provocation, what happened as a result of this military provocation and who is responsible for the escalation of the situation. Ours is a cause of justice and Azerbaijan will not take a step back from its principled position.

## **Letter dated 30 July 2020 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations H.E. Mr. António Guterres**

I am writing to convey profound concerns of my Government over continued irresponsible actions and provocative statements of Armenia against the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which pose existential challenges to the already shaky negotiation process under the OSCE Minsk Group for the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

On July 12, Azerbaijan for yet another time became subject to Armenia's armed attack along the Armenia-Azerbaijan international border. During four consecutive days, Armenia subjected Azerbaijani military positions and nearby residential areas to heavy artillery shelling. As a result, Azerbaijan suffered civilian and military casualties and serious damage was inflicted upon civilian infrastructure, including private houses and hospitals.

The attack by Armenia on 12-16 July was by no means a spontaneous military incident, but yet another deliberate act of aggression, being the latest manifestation of Armenia's illegal use of force against the Republic of Azerbaijan, and pursued the goal of seizing new part of Azerbaijan. This reckless military assault was planned well in advance on the basis of aggressive military doctrine, which according to Minister of Defence of Armenia envisages "pre-emptive strikes aiming at creating more favourable security situation" and "new war for new territories".

Acting upon such an aggressive military doctrine, the July 12 attack was deliberately carried out along the international border on the basis of several military and political calculations. First of all, the border was seen by Armenia as the most favourable place to conduct a "surprise strike" on Azerbaijan, in light of Azerbaijan's decision to gradually de-militarize the non-occupied part of the border and put it under control of the State Border Service. Apparently, Armenia made an attempt, albeit unsuccessful, to exploit this good will gesture of Azerbaijan. Secondly, the attack was carried out in the region through which, critical energy and transport infrastructure of Azerbaijan is running, thus, threatening the energy resources supplies from Azerbaijan. Furthermore, the attack along the border pursued the aim of creating a pretext for a possible intervention of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), to which Armenia is a member.

Yet, all these calculations of Armenia proved to be wrong. The attack was successfully repulsed and the threat to civilian Azerbaijani settlements and critical infrastructure was effectively neutralized by adequate counter-measures of the armed forces of Azerbaijan. But, apparently it did not stop Armenia to explore further possibilities for its destabilizing purposes.

Thus, having failed on the battlefield, the Armenian leadership resorted to campaign of terror and intimidation against Azerbaijanis abroad through radical Armenian Diaspora organizations. In different parts of the world, Armenian ultra-nationalist extremist groups, wearing signs of notorious Armenian terror organizations, such as ASALA, attacked on and vandalized the premises of Azerbaijani diplomatic missions, attempted to obstruct peaceful and pre-authorized demonstrations of the Azerbaijani community members, physically and verbally assaulted individual Azerbaijanis, including the diplomats and journalists. Along with massive physical violence, the Internet as well as the social media was extensively abused to disseminate hatred and intimidation, including open death threats against Azerbaijanis.

All these destabilizing actions of Armenia are accompanied by extremely provocative rhetoric by the Armenian senior leadership, which cannot but seriously undermine the settlement process rendering the negotiations absolutely meaningless.

Most recently, the Prime Minister of Armenia has publicly confessed that strategic goal for Armenia in the settlement process of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is to "safeguard the results of the war". The Armenian leadership publicly conditioned the resumption of negotiations, which is paused due to its own faults, with unrealistic and illegitimate claims pursuing notorious purpose of imposing a fait accompli and annexation of currently occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

This is diametrically opposite to the spirit and logic of negotiations under the OSCE Minsk Group. It should be reminded once again that the task of the negotiation process, as defined by relevant OSCE decisions and endorsed by four resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993)), is to eliminate, through de-occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan, the consequences of the war unleashed by Armenia. Azerbaijan has been participating in this process for almost three decades with that purpose aiming at restoring its territorial integrity through peaceful means. This commitment of Azerbaijan to peace is without prejudice to its rights under the UN Charter and international law, in general, and thus, should not be taken for granted and further abused.

It is within this context that the Azerbaijani side appeals to the international community to firmly stand behind the values, norms and principles underpinning civilized international order by condemning Armenia's destabilizing actions and inflammatory statements blatantly violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and urge Armenia to comply with the principles of inter-state relations and to fulfill in good faith its obligations under the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council of 1993. This is crucially important in order to stop Armenia from undermining the remaining perspectives for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In this regard, we count on your solidarity and effective support in defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## **Letter dated 8 August 2020 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group H.E. Mr. Igor Popov, H.E. Mr. Andrew Schofer and H.E. Mr. Stéphane Visconti**

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest attempts by Armenia to change the demographic feature of the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, this time cynically exploiting the tragic explosion that hit the city of Beirut, Lebanon on August 4, 2020.

According to various Armenian mass media reports, the Armenian authorities plan to accelerate their already ongoing program of transfer of Lebanese-Armenians to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan after the explosion. Thus, just few hours later the tragic events in Beirut, the senior Armenian leadership reportedly confirmed the readiness of Armenia to accept further Lebanese-Armenian families, 150 of which are planned to be settled in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

I have to highlight that this is not for the first time that Armenia abuses humanitarian sufferings in the countries with sizeable Armenian population, such as Syria, Iraq and Lebanon for the purpose of its illegal settlement policy.

The latest reports on transfer of Lebanese-Armenians to the occupied territories come in the context of this policy of Armenia, which has especially been intensified and geographically expanded over recent years. Thus, Armenia has made special focus on settling the districts adjacent to the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, in particular the districts of Lachin, Kalbajar, Zangilan, Jabrayil and Gubadly, which had no Armenian population before the occupation.

A scheme of subsidies and incentives has been put in place to encourage Armenian settlers to move to the occupied territories. Also, permanent social and economic infrastructure in support of settlement enterprise is being constructed.

It should also be noted that implantation of settlers runs in parallel to changing the Azerbaijani ethno-cultural features of these territories. Almost all native toponyms of historical Azerbaijani places in the occupied territories have been altered.

Armenia's efforts to artificially increase the Armenian population in the occupied territories and change ethno-cultural nature of these territories serve its goal to secure annexation of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. Therefore, it is not coincidence at all that the practice of illegal settlements is accompanied with statements by various Armenian officials that Armenia "will not return" or even "is not holding negotiations to return any territory to Azerbaijan".

Armenia with its illegal settlement policy flagrantly violates the resolutions on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict adopted by the United Nations Security Council (822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993), 884 (1993)) and General Assembly (A/Res/48/114 and A/Res/62/243), international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The illegal settlement policy contradicts the very concept of the negotiations which should lead to a solution on the basis of implementation of the above-mentioned UN SC resolutions through withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan and return of displaced



Azerbaijani population to their places of origin in safety and dignity. As such, this clearly demonstrates insincerity of Armenia in negotiations and its real purpose.

In this regard, I refer to the Minsk Group Co-Chairs' conclusion made as a result of their fact-finding mission to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan back in 2005 that changes in demographic structure of the occupied territories must be avoided, since "it makes more difficult any future efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement". The co-chairs further emphasized that "the longer [settlers] remain in the occupied territories, the deeper their roots and attachments to their present places of residence will become" and "prolonged continuation of this situation could lead to a fait accompli that would seriously complicate the peace process".

It is within this unfortunate context that I appeal to you, in your capacity as the co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group to take most urgent steps with a view to persuading Armenia to stop transferring Armenians into the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and reverse its consequences. Your personal intervention in this regard is of utmost necessity in order to overcome yet another serious blow of Armenia to the shaky negotiation process, which has already been seriously undermined by the recent provocative and irresponsible actions and statements of Armenia.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## **Letter dated 14 August 2020 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group H.E. Mr. Igor Popov, H.E. Mr. Andrew Schofer and H.E. Mr. Stéphane Visconti**

Further to my letter of 08 August 2020, I am writing to you again to raise serious concerns over continued illegal activities by Armenia with regard to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Apparently, encouraged by the lack of adequate reaction to its declared plan of implanting Lebanese-Armenians to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, Armenia has already started the transfer of families from Lebanon. Like many ethnic Armenians from abroad, in particular from Syria, Iraq and Lebanon initially transferred to Armenia under benign humanitarian slogans and then diverted to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, these families will be also finally abused for the purpose of illegal settlement policy of Armenia.

As it is seen, the call of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group of 2005 and 2010 on the necessity of avoiding further illegal settlements has not been enough for Armenia to take demanded steps in respect to the position of the international community and international law.

Transfer of Lebanese-Armenians is by no means an isolated case. Rather, it should be seen in a broader context of Armenia's systematic policy of illegally changing the physical, cultural and demographic character of the occupied territories with a view to imposing a fait accompli. As such, these illegal activities contradict the very logic of the process of political settlement of the conflict and cannot simply go on simultaneously with the negotiations, and must be addressed accordingly. The following two recent examples provide further testimony to the growing scale and gravity of Armenia's policy of annexation.

First of all, puppet regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories has recently announced the intention to move certain so-called "residences" from Khankandi to Shusha. This reckless plan of Armenia aims at consolidating the results of notorious ethnic cleansing policy, and clearly demonstrates its disrespect to the essence of peaceful efforts under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group.

On this point, I feel compelled to remind that the issue of Shusha holds a special place in the context of the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict due to its exceptional historical, cultural and moral significance for the People of Azerbaijan. Accordingly, safe and dignified return of all expelled Azerbaijani population to their places of origin in the occupied territories, including in the city of Shusha is a red line in the negotiation process. Therefore, it is of utmost necessity to persuade Armenia to abandon its extremely dangerous plan, which would inevitably lead to serious consequences for the entire peace process.

Secondly, Armenia's illegal and malicious activities with regard to the Sarsang water reservoir, including the plan to build a new canal continue to be a source of the serious concern due to multiple accounts. These illegal activities represent a permanent change to the infrastructure of the occupied territories and illegal exploitation of natural resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan as well as interference with public and private property rights. Moreover, exploitation of the reservoir by Armenia as a tool of environmental terror has already deprived the Azerbaijani civilians of water resources and led to serious environmental degradation, including soil erosion affecting biodiversity and productivity in residential areas along the occupation line. Construction of a new canal will further aggravate these environmental challenges.

Furthermore, illegal construction of a canal, like other infrastructural changes, such as building new road connecting Armenia and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, should also be seen in the context of Armenia's illegal settlement policy, as it clearly aims at providing additional incentives for attracting more ethnic Armenians to settle in the occupied territories.

The above-mentioned takes place in the context of the declared state policy of Armenia to consolidate the results of the use of force against Azerbaijan. Numerous statements by the senior officials of Armenia to that effect have now found its reflection in its recently unveiled national security strategy, according to which the strategic goal of Armenia in the negotiation process is to "safeguard the outcomes of the war".

This is diametrically opposite to the letter and spirit of the OSCE Minsk Group Process. It should be reminded once again that the task of the negotiation process, as defined by relevant OSCE decisions and endorsed by four resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993)), is to eliminate, through de-occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan, the consequences of the war unleashed by Armenia.

Armenia's actions and statements must be dealt with full seriousness by the Co-Chairmen as mandate-holders for the resolution of the conflict. Lack of adequate reaction so far has contributed to the culture of impunity, encouraged Armenian leadership to commit further provocations, both military and political, and in the end led to current stalemate in the negotiation process. Further failure in this regard, could lead to even more serious consequences.

It is within this context that I renew my urgent appeal to you to take all necessary effective measures to persuade Armenia to reverse its dangerous path undermining the remaining prospects for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Along with political diplomatic measures, clear and targeted public statement by the Co-Chairmen addressing the above-mentioned issues is of utmost necessity to that end.

Such a public statement would make it clear for Armenia that reliance on the illegal and unacceptable status-quo and illegal activities serving to its prolongation are condemned and resolutely rejected by the countries co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group.

Armenia should finally abandon the illusion that occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan has any chance to produce an outcome desired by this country. Instead, Armenia should be persuaded to denounce its illegal activities and engage in negotiations in good faith to seek a political resolution to the conflict. For the Azerbaijani society it is difficult to understand the reasons of continued inability by the three co-chairing powers to urge Armenia to comply with its obligations under international law.

Azerbaijan, in its turn, continues to remain committed to the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The position of Azerbaijan is reflected in the Memorandum of 3 December 2019 distributed during the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Bratislava last year (SEC.DEL575/19) and remains unchanged. It is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, international law, related UN Security Council Resolutions and OSCE documents.

I count on your reaction to and effective steps on issues raised above.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## **Letter dated 31 August 2020 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy H.E. Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles**

In light of continued illegal transfer of settlers by Armenia to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, I feel compelled to address you once again on this matter of the deepest concern for Azerbaijan.

At the outset, I would like to recall the conclusion of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group that changes in demographic structure of the occupied territories must be avoided, since "it makes more difficult any future efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement". The co-chairs emphasized that "the longer [settlers] remain in the occupied territories, the deeper their roots and attachments to their present places of residence will become" and "prolonged continuation of this situation could lead to a fait accompli that would seriously complicate the peace process".

Mass media reports, including personal testimonies of individual Armenians illegally settled in the occupied territories, as well as evidence from other sources testify that illegal settlement policy pursued by Armenia with a view to changing demographic character of the territories of Azerbaijan it has been keeping under military occupation for almost three decades, has especially been intensified and geographically expanded over the recent years. Armenia makes special focus on settling the districts adjacent to the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, in particular the districts of Lachin, Kalbajar, Zangilan, Jabrayil and Gubadly. It is of particular importance to note that these regions had no Armenian population before the occupation and their indigenous Azerbaijani population has been totally expelled by Armenia.

Monitoring via satellite confirms that a residential complex started to be built in late 2019 in the occupied Kalbajar district now contains 15 houses, and the speed of construction observed in this particular area leaves no doubt that the complex will be further expanded. Similar activities are also going on with respect to so-called residential complexes "Arajamugh" in Jabrayil and "Ariavan" in Lachin.

Armenia transfers settlers to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan not only from Armenia, but also from other countries, including Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, which host sizeable Armenian diaspora, exploiting complicated situation in these countries for its annexationist political agenda. This policy gained new momentum in the aftermath of the horrific explosion that hit the city of Beirut, Lebanon on August 4. The tragedy, apparently, is seen by Armenia as an opportunity to accelerate the already ongoing plan of implanting Lebanese-Armenians to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. It has already started the transfer of Armenian families. Like many ethnic Armenians initially transferred to Armenia under benign humanitarian slogans and then diverted to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (list of recently identified settlers is attached), these families will be also finally abused for the purpose of illegal settlement policy of Armenia.

Implantation of settlers runs in parallel to changing the Azerbaijani ethno-cultural features of these territories. Almost all native toponyms of historical Azerbaijani places in the occupied territories have been altered. A scheme of subsidies and incentives has been put in place to encourage Armenian settlers to move to the occupied territories. Also, permanent social and economic infrastructure in support of settlement enterprise is being constructed.

Armenia with its illegal settlement policy flagrantly violates the resolutions on the Armenia- Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict adopted by the United Nations Security Council (822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993), 884 (1993)) and General Assembly (A/Res/48/114 and A/Res/62/243), international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The illegal settlement policy contradicts the very concept of the negotiations which should lead to a solution on the basis of implementation of the above-mentioned UN SC resolutions through withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan and return of displaced Azerbaijani population to their places of origin in safety and dignity. It is not coincidence at all that the practice of illegal settlements is accompanied with statements by various Armenian officials that Armenia "will not return" or even "is not holding negotiations to return any territory to Azerbaijan", which has now been reflected in the recently unveiled national security strategy of Armenia that defines the strategic goal of Armenia in the negotiation process as to "safeguard the outcomes of war".

It is within this unfortunate context that I appeal to you to take the most urgent steps with a view to persuading Armenia to stop transferring Armenians into the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and reverse its consequences. Along with political and diplomatic measures, a clear and targeted public statement addressing the issue is of utmost necessity to that end. Such a public statement would make it clear for Armenia that reliance on the illegal and unacceptable status-quo and illegal activities serving to its prolongation are condemned and resolutely rejected by the international community.

Furthermore, given the attempts by Armenia in the past to use the EU funds for illegal settlement activities, I also request You to ensure that any EU funds allocated to Armenia directly or indirectly through its subsidiary programs in no way assist or contribute to continuation of illegal settlement policy, and to take effective steps, including through the use of existing control mechanisms, in order to prevent legal and natural persons of the EU Member States from engaging in any activity that serves to continuation of illegal settlement policy of Armenia and maintenance of occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan.

Your personal intervention in this regard is of utmost necessity in order to overcome yet another serious blow of Armenia to the shaky negotiation process, which has already been seriously undermined by the recent provocative and irresponsible actions and statements of Armenia.

Enclosure: Facts on illegal settlements, 10 pages

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## Facts on illegal settlements (Excerpts from the enclosure to the letter)

New settlement in Khanlyg village in the occupied Gubadly district 39° 16' 3.59" N, 46° 43' 13.12" E



29 September 2002



30 September 2018



"Ariavan" settlement in the occupied Lachyn district  
Source: <http://www.aricroots.com> | 2016



Newly constructed "Arajamugh" settlement in the occupied Jabrayil district  
Source: <https://armenianweekly.com> | 2017

For more details see the Report entitled *Illegal Activities in the Territories of Azerbaijan under Armenia's Occupation: Evidence from Satellite Imagery*

Newly built houses in the town of Zangilan in the occupied Zangilan district 39° 4' 55.67" N, 46° 39' 24.07" E



9 February 2004



3 August 2017

Newly constructed buildings in the town of Kalbajar in the occupied Kalbajar district 40° 6' 35.50" N, 46° 2' 42.07" E



30 November 2005



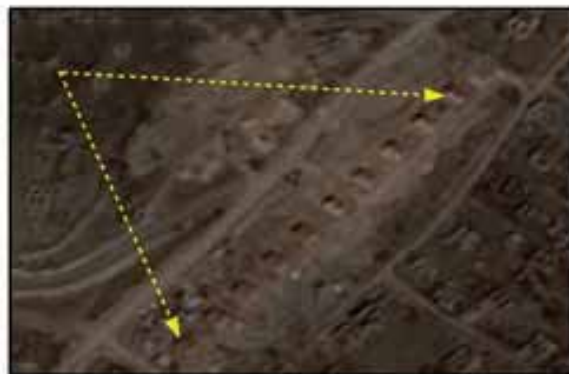
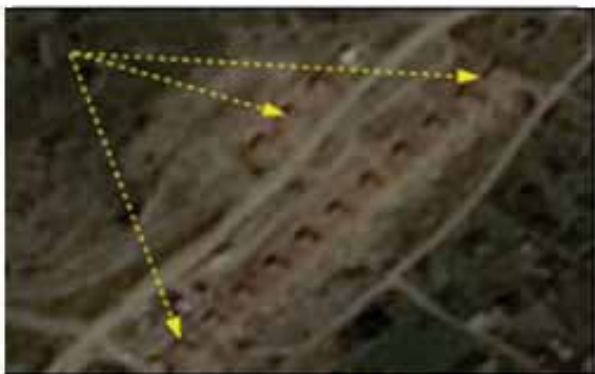
16 July 2015

For more details see the Report entitled *Illegal Activities in the Territories of Azerbaijan under Armenia's Occupation: Evidence from Satellite Imagery*





**15 new houses in Kalbajar district, Azersky image, August 5, 2020**



## Excerpts from the statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the General Debates of the 9th plenary meeting of the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly

September 24, 2020



Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

I congratulate the President of the 75th session of the General Assembly, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, on his election. We were delighted with the election of a representative of the brotherly Turkey to such a distinguished post. You can be sure that Azerbaijan will spare no effort in extending its support to you in this responsible and honourable endeavour.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals stipulates that, “there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”. To achieve sustainable international peace and security, there must be put an end to occupation. Adherence to the norms and principles of the international law and implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions must be ensured.

Almost 20% of the territory of Azerbaijan remains under occupation of Armenia for almost 30 years. Armenia used military force against Azerbaijan, in brutal violation of the UN Charter and occupied

Nagorno-Karabakh and seven other regions of Azerbaijan. More than one million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced persons.

Armenia carried out the ethnic cleansing against the Azerbaijani population in the occupied territories. All Azerbaijanis have been forcibly expelled from occupied territories. Armenia committed a number of war crimes and crimes against humanity against Azerbaijani civilians. Armenia established the criminal, terrorist puppet regime in these territories to hide its responsibility for occupation of our lands.

Armenia committed Khojaly genocide in 1992 killing 613 peaceful residents of Khojaly, among them 106 women and 63 children. More than ten countries have recognized the Khojaly genocide.

Four UN Security Council resolutions demand immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from Azerbaijan's occupied territories.

In some case, UN Security Council resolutions have been implemented within days. However, Armenia continues to ignore the UN Security Council's resolutions for almost 30 years. International sanctions must be imposed on Armenia as an aggressor state.

In blatant violation of the international law norms, Armenia implements a policy of illegal settlement on the occupied territories. While the international community, including Azerbaijan is concentrating on eliminating the consequences of Beirut explosion, Armenia misuses the situation by settling Lebanese people of Armenian origin in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

The illegal settlement is a gross violation of international law, including the Geneva Convention of 1949. This is a war crime. The illegal settlement in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan cannot have any legal effect.

Cultural heritage of Azerbaijani people on the territory of today's Armenia has been demolished and plundered. Armenia also destroyed all Azerbaijani historical and religious monuments in the occupied territories. The aim is to erase all Azerbaijani traces there.

Armenia illegally exploits natural resources and uses water reserves to create an artificial environmental crisis in the occupied territories. Armenia extracts gold and other precious metals and minerals of the occupied lands of Azerbaijan and exports to the international markets. It is a scheme of illegal business activities and money laundering.

International companies illegally exploiting Azerbaijan's natural resources on the occupied territories will face legal responsibility, if they don't stop their illicit activity immediately. Azerbaijan has already started to take legal action against persons and companies illegally exploiting our natural resources on the occupied lands.

Armenia deliberately targets civilian population and perpetrates provocations along the Line of Contact and Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

In April 2016, Armenia launched a large-scale military attack against Azerbaijan. As a result of this attack, 6 Azerbaijani civilians, including one child were killed, 26 civilians were wounded.

Armed Forces of Azerbaijan took counter-measures and liberated a part of occupied territories.

Deliberate attack by Armenia in 2017 led to death of 2 years old Zahra Guliyeva and her grandmother.

On July 12, 2020 Armenia perpetrated another provocation along the state border. Our military servicemen and a 76-year-old civilian were killed due to the artillery bombardment of Azerbaijan's Tovuz district, while extensive damage was done to civilian infrastructure.

The purpose of this provocation by Armenia was to create a new source of tension in the region, set aside the issue of Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijan's territories, involve third parties in the conflict, and damage Azerbaijan's strategic infrastructure projects. They also attempted to distract its people's attention from growing socio-economic problems in Armenia.

However, Azerbaijan retaliated resolutely, and Armenia failed to achieve any of those objectives. Armenia faced another military defeat. Armenia appealed to ODKB (Collective Security Treaty Organization) for military assistance, thus admitting its defeat.

Recently, Armenian sabotage group attempted to penetrate through the Line of Contact. The head of this group was detained by Azerbaijani military servicemen on 23 August this year. He confessed that the group was planning to commit terror acts against Azerbaijani military servicemen and civilians.

The Armenian Government turned down Azerbaijan's proposal to exchange all captives based on the principle "all to all". Azerbaijani civilians Dilgam Asgarov and Shahbaz Guliyev, who visited the graves of their parents in the occupied territories, were taken hostage and tortured. They remain in captivity for more than six years.

The so-called "elections" this March on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan were yet another provocation. These so-called "elections", like previous ones, were strongly condemned and rejected by the international community, including OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs, Non-Aligned Movement, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, European Union, European Parliament and others.

Illegal presence of the armed forces of Armenia in the occupied lands of Azerbaijan remains a major threat to regional peace and security. Armenia tries to derail the peace process under the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs. The aim pursued by Armenia is to maintain the current status-quo of occupation and to annex the occupied territories. Contrary to the constructive engagement of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of Armenia deliberately undermines the format and substance of negotiation process. His statement that "Karabakh is Armenia" seriously damages the negotiations process. His unacceptable and groundless so-called seven conditions to Azerbaijan have been rejected by us. We have put forward only one condition to achieve the peace. The armed forces of Armenia must withdraw from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The entire world recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as integral part of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian Prime Minister announced the establishment of civilian militia consisting of tens of thousands of civilians who will be forced to undertake military actions against Azerbaijan. The minister of defence of Armenia calls for "new war for new territories". Armenia threatens Azerbaijan to strike major cities, critical civilian infrastructures such as Mingachevir water reservoir and Sangachal terminal, which is one of the world's biggest oil-gas terminals situated near Baku and providing energy security to tens of countries.

Armenia recruits and uses mercenaries and terrorists from different countries against Azerbaijan. Armenia is a state sponsoring terrorism. Armenia committed more than 30 terror acts in Azerbaijan. We have credible information about the presence of Armenian ASALA terror organization on the occupied territories.

Armenian terrorists have killed 24 Turkish diplomats. Varuzhan Karapetian, member of ASALA terror organization who committed a terror act killing many people of different nationalities, in the airport Orly in Paris later was extradited to Armenia and then pardoned by the president of Armenia. This terrorist was treated as a hero in Armenia.

Recently, Armenia has adopted its aggressive and offensive military doctrine and National Security Strategy. The National Security Strategy contains racist, chauvinistic and "Azerbaijanophobic" ideas.

The glorification of Nazism is the state policy of Armenia. Nazi general Garegin Nzhdeh has been turned into "national hero". After the Second World War, he was detained and sentenced to 25 years in prison and died there. Almost 6 meter high monument was built in the memory of Nzhdeh in the centre of capital of Armenia. Members of a number of Armenian terror organizations like ASALA are glorified in this country.

Hostile, Azerbaijanophobic statements and provocations of Armenian leadership demonstrate that Armenia is preparing for a new aggression against Azerbaijan. We call on the UN and international community to urge Armenia to refrain from another military aggression.

The military-political leadership of Armenia will bear all responsibility for instigating provocations and escalation of tensions.

Regretfully, the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chair's activity has not yet delivered any results. Negotiations must not be conducted just for the sake of negotiations, they must be target-oriented and meaningful.

Presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chair countries – France, Russia and United States in their statements stressed that the status-quo is unacceptable. We welcome these statements, but statements are not enough. We need actions.

Our involvement in the negotiation process for almost 30 years is a clear demonstration of our commitment to peace. All 11 members of Minsk Group should be actively involved in the process.

In accordance with the UN Security Council resolution 853, updated timetable for withdrawal of armed forces of Armenia from occupied territories of Azerbaijan must be prepared. Appropriate UN institutions must contribute to the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions and return of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons to their native lands. The UN Security Council resolutions are not time-specific. These resolutions are valid until they are implemented. Misinterpretation of UN Security Council resolutions is unacceptable.

The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict must be resolved on the basis of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's territorial integrity has never been and will never be a subject of negotiations. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be completely restored. Nagorno-Karabakh is ancient and historical Azerbaijani lands. Karabakh is Azerbaijan.

We are seriously concerned by increasing cases of arms supply to Armenia, especially right after the military provocation of Armenia in Tovuz district of Azerbaijan. Active military clashes at the state border stopped on July 16. Next day starting from July 17 until September, we witnessed delivery of more than one thousand tons of military equipment to Armenia by military cargo planes. Taking into account that Armenia is one of the poorest countries of the world and cannot afford paying for weapons billions of US dollars, we assume that it gets weapons free of charge.

Supply of weapons to an aggressor and a country that perpetrated ethnic cleansing significantly undermines the peace negotiations and encourage the occupying state to instigate new military provocations. In this context, we urge all countries to refrain from supplying arms to Armenia.

Because of aggression against Azerbaijan, Armenia continues to face deep demographic, social and economic crisis. Regime change happened in Armenia two years ago, but fascist ideology of this failed state remains unchanged.

Human rights are massively violated in Armenia. Judges are pressured and blackmailed, journalists, opposition activists and political opponents jailed by despotic regime. In fact, a dictatorship has been established in Armenia.

Criminal cases have been opened against two former presidents of this country. Members of parliament despite their immunity are detained.

Mher Yegiazarian, an Armenian journalist and politician died in prison following hunger strike in January 2019. But there was no reaction from international organizations whose duty is to observe democracy and human rights worldwide. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Freedom House and others turned a blind eye on inhuman and brutal actions of despotic regime of Armenia. The reason can be that Pashinyan regime is financed and supported by Soros who sponsors many so-called human rights non-governmental organizations worldwide.

Political relations in this country have reached the point of crisis. The country has been ruled by warlords over 20 years. Incumbent political leadership continues the practice of previous regimes. There is no prospect for development of Armenia unless the consequences of military aggression against Azerbaijan are eliminated. Armenia was the only country to oppose the initiative of holding the Special Session of UN General Assembly in response to COVID-19, whereas in Armenia, the situation with coronavirus is the most desperate. Armenia objected to this initiative only because Azerbaijan has launched it. The objection to such an endeavour is a product of irrational thought. It is another demonstration of the policy of "Azerbaijanophobia" that has prevailed in Armenia and promoted by the government. Hatred against Azerbaijani people is instilled in the young generation.

Despite the enormous difficulties caused by Armenian occupation, Azerbaijan managed to build a stable, modern, democratic and multicultural country. Development of democracy and human rights protection are among top priorities of our government. All fundamental freedoms are fully provided, including freedom of expression, media freedom, freedom of assembly, religious freedoms, as well as development of civil society. We launched broad political dialogue initiative several months ago. All major political parties supported this initiative. The political dialogue which successfully started would help to strengthen our political system and serve the cause of sustainable development of Azerbaijan.

## Press release of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**September 24, 2020**

The chain of provocations committed by Armenia under the leadership of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan both in words and deeds has undermined the negotiation process for the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and led to a significant rise of tension in the region (the non-exhaustive list is attached herewith). The bellicose statements, military, and other provocations accompanied by aggressive military posturing show that Armenia is preparing for new aggression against Azerbaijan.

Disproving whatever expectations the international community might have, the leadership of Armenia, since the very first days of assuming power, has opted to replicate the annexationist policy of his predecessors. Armenia publicly denounced its adherence to the logic and understandings underlying the OSCE Minsk Group-led negotiation process for years envisaging step-by-step withdrawal of its forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and thus undermined the negotiations. As the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev stated in his interview on September 19, "these politically flawed and harmful statements do not leave room for negotiations."

Instead, Armenia has adopted a military doctrine and national security strategy under Pashinyan, which envisages a concept of "new war for new territories" and define the strategic goal of this country in the negotiation process as safeguarding the outcomes of the war. Together with its intensified and expanded illegal activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including the illegal transfer of ethnic Armenians from the Middle East to the seized lands, the current leadership of Armenia has effectively proved that it pursues an annexationist policy and exploits the negotiations under the OSCE Minsk Group to that end. The aggressive behaviour of Armenia was culminated by a deliberate act of aggression on July 12-16 in the Tovuz direction of the Azerbaijan-Armenia state border. This armed attack was by no means a spontaneous military incident, but a clear manifestation of Armenia's illegal use of force against the Republic of Azerbaijan, and pursued the goal of seizing a new part of Azerbaijan.

Having failed in this "test" attack, nevertheless continuing preparation for the next turn of aggression, Armenia has acquired a large amount of weapons and ammunition and concentrated its forces along the line of contact. Threats of striking Azerbaijan's critical civilian infrastructure and large residential areas are accompanied by intensified military reconnaissance and subversive actions deep inside the territory of Azerbaijan. In parallel, Armenia announced the establishment of a civilian militia consisting of tens of thousands of civilians who will be forced to undertake military actions against Azerbaijan.

In view of Armenia's preparation for a new military offensive, Azerbaijan calls on the international community, in particular, the OSCE Minsk Group and its Co-Chairmen to bring Armenia to terms of common sense and urge this country to refrain from another aggression.

The Armenian leadership must withdraw from its provocative statements, cease all destabilizing actions, and faithfully comply with its commitments to achieve a political settlement, the parameters of which have already been identified by four resolutions of the UN Security Council and the decisions and documents of the OSCE. Until it happens statements by Armenian officials on the alleged readiness of Armenia for negotiations shall not deceive either Azerbaijan or the international community.

As it was stated by President Ilham Aliyev at the high-level event to mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, there is only one way to achieve peace: the armed forces of Armenia must withdraw from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is not and will not ever be a subject of compromise.

### **ARMENIA'S PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS SINCE NIKOL PASHINYAN HAS BECOME THE PRIME MINISTER OF ARMENIA ON MAY 8, 2018**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
8 May 2018	In his address to Armenia's National Assembly, prior to his election as PM, N.Pashinyan raised the issue of participation of the illegal regime established in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan as a party to the negotiations. Thus, he has started questioning the format of negotiations and has been doing so on numerous occasions.
9 May 2018	On the next day of the election, together with his wife, N.Pashinyan visited the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. In Khankandi, he participated in the celebration of the occupation of the Azerbaijani city of Shusha, discussed the issue of improvement of the mechanism of "restraint of the enemy" and opened the "Armenian Dram Museum" in Shusha.
16 June 2018	N.Pashinyan visited again the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, inspected positions of the armed forces of Armenia in the eastern part of the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region, and held military consultations with illegal regime "officials".
9 July 2018	N.Pashinyan sent his son to undergo military service in the units of armed forces of Armenia deployed in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. He said that this gesture had been intended to encourage more Armenians to be enlisted in the army.
8 Sept. 2018	In meeting with the Russian-Armenian businessmen in Moscow, N.Pashinyan openly said that "he perceived Artsakh as part of Armenia in the future".



27 February 2019	Armenia's National Security Service Director Artur Vanetsyan at a press conference in the occupied Khankandi city said: "The program that we call a resettlement program, in my and everyone's assessment will be the main guarantee of our country's security. Because there are those speeches, those expressions, and those people who always manipulate this subject as if the lands will be returned, will be negotiated, conceded, etc. As a result of that program, we will send a clear message to all our people and the world that we have no intention to give up an inch of land; on the contrary, our compatriots must settle on those lands and build our country."
12 March 2019	N.Pashinyan visited the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and in Khankandi city of Azerbaijan, held a joint meeting of the Security Councils of Armenia and the illegal regime created by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.
30 March 2019	In a meeting with the Armenian community in New York, the Armenian Minister of Defence Davit Tonoyan stated that a "territories for peace" approach will no longer be applied. "As the minister of defence, I announce that this format, territories for peace, I have re-phrased it. We are doing the opposite – a new war for new territories," Tonoyan said. He also said that Armenia will increase the number of its strike units.
9 May 2019	N.Pashinyan visited the occupied territories of Azerbaijan where he took part in the celebrations of the occupation of Shusha city.
30 May 2019	Armenia grossly violated the ceasefire regime on the front line. At a time when the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group paid a visit to Azerbaijan, on May 30 in the morning, a major of the Azerbaijan Army Mr. Agil Omarov was shot and killed by a sniper of the armed forces of Armenia in the direction of the Aghdam district.
10 June 2019	Minister of Defence D.Tonoyan confirmed that he had personally ordered the killing of an Azerbaijani soldier in the direction of Tartar district of the front line and publicly awarded the murder of an Azerbaijani soldier.
5 August 2019	Ahead of the start of the Pan-Armenian Games, N.Pashinyan declared that "Artsakh is Armenia. Period." and the crowd chanted "Miatsum" (Unification).

6-17 August 2019	Armenia held pan-Armenian Games, for the first time, in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.
9 August 2019	Armenia announced another 4-year project aimed at changing the infrastructure of the Sarsang Water Reservoir. Also, the Armenian side announced the construction of the third highway to connect Armenia with the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. These infrastructural changes, which are in violation of international law and Azerbaijani legislation, aimed at the consolidation of occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan.
24 Sept. – 5 October 2019	Armenian armed forces held large-scale military exercises entitled "The expansion of the Armed Forces: Combating the adversary's aggression" in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan
23 December 2019	A joint session of the Security Councils of Armenia and the illegal regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories was held in Yerevan co-chaired by Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and "President" of the illegal regime Arayik Harutyunyan.
31 March 2020	Armenia held illegal "parliamentary" and "presidential" elections in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.
21 April 2020	Commenting the remarks by Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, S.Lavrov, on "liberation of a number of areas around Nagorno-Karabakh and the unlocking of transport, economic and other communications", Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said: "There have not been and will not be any concessions. The Armenian sides will never exercise that approach".
23 April 2020	Armenia's MFA declared that a proposal for a peaceful settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, envisaging a step-by-step approach, is not acceptable.
26 June 2020	Armed forces of Armenia, with the participation of the Chief of Staff Onik Gasparyan, held military exercises in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

10 July 2020	Armenia adopted a revised National Security Strategy, which defined that the goal of the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict was to consolidate the outcomes of the war launched by Armenia against Azerbaijan.
12-16 July 2020	Armenia attacked the positions of Azerbaijan at the Armenia-Azerbaijan international border, in the direction of the Tovuz district. 12 servicemen of Azerbaijan and one civilian were killed.
23 July 2020	N.Pashinyan declared that after the July clashes the Armenian position on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict has been strengthened and he put forward 7 conditions, stipulating, inter alia, the following: the system of security of Armenia and the illegal regime "to be strengthened, the illegal regime "must become the full-fledged party to negotiations", international monitoring of the cease-fire regime must be strengthened, and etc.
4 August 2020	After the devastating explosion in Beirut, Armenia announced its plan to implant Lebanese Armenians to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. According to the Armenian mass media, several Armenians from Lebanon have already settled in the occupied territories, including in Shusha. Thus, Armenia intensified its illegal settlement policy in 2020.
11 August 2020	The illegal regime announced its intention of transferring "key administrative offices" to the occupied Shusha city.
17 August 2020	The illegal regime threatened to strike the Azerbaijani city of Ganja.
26 August 2020	The Armenian Defence Ministry announced the plan to create a nationwide militia that would reinforce Armenia's armed forces and could be deployed at "endangered sections" of Armenia's borders or "line of contact with the adversary".
28 August 2020	N.Pashinyan held the ceremony to award Armenian servicemen who conducted a military operation against Azerbaijan on July 12-16, 2020. In his speech, he again praised Armenian terrorists, such as Monte Melkonian, for their deeds against Azerbaijani civilians in the course of military operations in the early 1990s.

25-31 August 2020	Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Armenia's Prime Minister, together with other women participated in combat and shooting training courses in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Videos and photos of the training were widely distributed in the media.
29 August 2020	N.Pashinyan visited the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. He awarded servicemen who took part in military aggression against Azerbaijan both in the early 1990s and in July 2020.
21 Sept. 2020	N.Pashinyan issued a message to the nation on the 29th anniversary of Armenia's independence. 2nd line of the message reads "To the proud citizens of the Artsakh Republic!" [i.e. Karabakh].

## II. DIPLOMACY DURING THE WAR

### Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**September 27, 2020**

On September 27, 2020 the armed forces of Armenia blatantly violating the ceasefire regime have launched another aggression against Azerbaijan, by intensively shelling the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan along the frontline, as well as the villages of Qapanli of Tartar district, Chiragli and Orta Garavend of Aghdam district, Alkhanli and Shukurbeyli of Fuzuli district and Jojuq Merjanli of Jabrayil district, using large-calibre weapons, mortar launchers and artillery.

According to the information of the Ministry of Defence, there are reports of dead and wounded among civilians and military servicemen. Extensive damage has been inflicted on many homes and civilian infrastructure.

In order to prevent another military aggression by Armenia and provide the security of densely populated civilian residential areas the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan undertake counter-offensive measures within the right of self-defence and in full compliance with the international humanitarian law.

Another aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan is a blatant violation of fundamental norms and principles of international law, the international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, as well as the United Nations Security Council resolutions 822, 853, 874, 884 of 1993 demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

The new act of aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan is the continuation of the latest provocations of the Armenian side, including the attempt to an armed attack in the direction of Tovuz district on 12-16 July, 2020, the sabotage-reconnaissance group's provocation in the direction of Goranboy district, illegal settlement policy in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, as well as the provocative statements and activities of Armenian leadership.

Being well aware of the fact that the illegal presence of the armed forces of Armenia in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions of Azerbaijan is a serious threat to regional peace and security and demonstrating the principled position based on the norms and principles of international law on the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan and its illegal activities, the international community should strongly condemn Armenia's policy of aggression and provocative activities against Azerbaijan and force Armenia to comply with the international law, including its commitments under the international humanitarian law.

Full responsibility for the present situation falls on the political-military leadership of Armenia.

## Excerpts from the interview of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev to "Rossiya-1" TV channel's "60 minutes" program

**September 29, 2020**

*- Mr. President, thank you for agreeing to this interview. What is happening at the front line right now? Information about the use of aviation is already coming in.*

- The situation at the front line is tense. Due to the Armenian military provocation, which began on the morning of September 27, Azerbaijani settlements and our combat positions were subjected to massive artillery fire. As a result of this aggression, 11 Azerbaijani civilians, including two children, were killed. There are also casualties among the military. We were forced to respond adequately to the aggressor and, thus, protect our people and our land. Fierce battles have been going on for three days now. In their wake, Azerbaijan's Army has liberated several settlements from occupation and took strategic heights in different directions. Today the situation is such that active clashes are underway.

*- Mr. President, please, clarify Turkey's role. Through its President and head of the Foreign Ministry, Ankara has officially announced that it would help you on the battlefield.*

- I believe that Turkey is playing a stabilizing role in the region. Turkey is our brotherly country and our ally. From the very first hour, once the international community learned that Armenia attacked Azerbaijan, Turkey spoke out unequivocally at the level of the Head of State and other leaders in support of Azerbaijan, in support of international law. Armenia has grossly violated international law by occupying the territory of Azerbaijan for about 30 years. So that is Turkey's role - nothing else. Turkey provides us with moral support, and we are grateful to the Turkish leadership, the President and the Turkish people for their solidarity and support. Turkey does not participate in this conflict in any other capacity. All the rumours that Turkey is involved as a party to the conflict, circulated by the Armenian side, are provocative. As it is said, this is fake news. There is no evidence of Turkey's involvement in the conflict and nor is that necessary. Azerbaijan's Army is well-prepared to protect its people and territory.

*- Mr. President, you do not confirm; moreover, you deny the information that the Turkish Air Force shot down an Armenian Air Force plane just an hour ago. It was about the F-16 and Su-25.*

- We do not have this information. Just recently, I was informed that such news appeared in the information domain. It is not corroborated by anything. The F-16 aircraft of the Turkish Air Force do not participate in operations in any way. Given modern technologies' availability, it is very difficult to conceal anything today because there are objective forms of observation. There is satellite observation, and therefore it is easy to verify that this is another provocation. We understand the goal of the Armenian side - by creating such false news, they first want to belittle the combat capability of Azerbaijan's Army, which is now fulfilling the task of restoring its territorial integrity with dignity. And also to create the impression that the conflict is growing, that third countries are getting involved. They are trying to attract as many countries as possible to justify their provocation. Therefore, I state to you with full responsibility: Turkey is not a party to the conflict, does not participate in it in any way, and there is no need for that.

*- Mr. President, is your country ready to proceed towards the Kazan formula, within the framework of which Armenia must liberate several districts or any other formula? What can be done in principle*

*now? How can the situation be reversed, if the conflict in Karabakh has been burning or at least smouldering for as many as 30 years? What to do?*

- You know, Azerbaijan has always shown constructiveness on the negotiation track. And the Minsk Group co-chairs, who are responsible for the mediation mission, can confirm this. In particular, in the past two years, we have repeatedly stated, both myself and other officials, that we are committed to the resolution principles developed over the years and which the Minsk Group and its co-chairs consider the basis for the negotiating process. Moreover, we have repeatedly stated in the past two years, and before that, we are committed to the negotiation format. Negotiations are underway between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There are only two sides to the conflict. Sometimes, when talking about the conflict, there is a mention of all sides. It is an erroneous definition - not all sides. There are only two sides – Armenia and Azerbaijan. Still, look at what has been happening in recent years after the Soros coup carried out by the current government in Armenia. The Armenian prime minister publicly declares that Karabakh is Armenia, full stop. In this case, what negotiations can we talk about? After all, the essence of the principles developed by the OSCE Minsk Group is that the territories around the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region should be transferred to Azerbaijan. And then he says that Karabakh is Armenia and that we have to negotiate with the so-called puppet regime of Nagorno-Karabakh. Thereby, trying to undermine the format of negotiations that have already existed for 20 years, Armenia deliberately disrupts the negotiations and puts forward unacceptable demands. When the Minsk Group recently began to speak more actively about who remains an obstacle to the resolution, they resorted to provocations like September 27. Before that, on July 12, our positions at the state border were attacked. On August 23, an Armenian subversion group was captured; its leader was captured on the line of contact. Everything is being done to derail the negotiations, then accuse Azerbaijan, and then involve third parties, thereby undermining the talks. The reason is that the Armenian side wants to maintain the status-quo. The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group represented by the Presidents of Russia, France and the United States have repeatedly made statements that the status-quo is unacceptable. And this means that the territories under occupation must be returned to Azerbaijan. We are committed to negotiations, but we see completely opposite actions from the Armenian side.

*- Please, tell us, Mr. President, what happened on Sunday. What provoked such a large-scale and bloody confrontation?*

- You know, Armenia had been moving towards this Sunday, towards what happened on Sunday for several months. If you track their actions and statements' chronology, you will clearly see that they deliberately went for this provocation. Not so long ago, speaking at the UN General Assembly, I openly said that Armenia was preparing for war, and it must be stopped. In July, they launched an armed attack on our settlements along the state border. It is far away from the conflict zone. One civilian and several servicemen were killed then. The clashes lasted four days. Since we did not have and still do not have any military targets across Armenia, as soon as the Armenian armed forces were driven back from our territory, the fire was ceased by mutual agreement. Then, as I said, in August a subversion group infiltrated our territory and was neutralized. Then the Armenian side publicly and defiantly announced the resettlement of Armenians from Lebanon to the occupied territories and to our ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha, which amounts to a war crime. It is a violation of the Geneva Convention. It is done demonstratively. Before that, they held the so-called swearing-in ceremony for the so-called leader of the criminal Nagorno-Karabakh regime in Shusha, an ancient pearl of Azerbaijani culture.

All these are deliberate provocations against us, attempts to drag us into conflict and provoke retaliatory actions. We showed restraint, constructiveness and common sense, but when they failed, they made this attempt. Moreover, another reason is the internal political crisis in Armenia. After all, there is a Soros regime in Armenia today. The coup that failed in Belarus was successful in Yerevan two years ago. Today the Armenian leader in the person of Pashinyan is Soros's henchman, a man who made many promises and who cannot fulfill them, and the country is in crisis.

So he needed an external factor, some mess, so to speak, to divert the population's attention, which he succeeded in doing. Moreover, just two days before they attacked us, Armenia's prominent opposition party leader was arrested. The dictatorial and despotic regime of Pashinyan eliminated the entire opposition in his country and is now demonstrating aggression against the Azerbaijani people again.

- *Your position is clear. Many thanks! Can you please say briefly: yes or no? Are there fighters from Syria on the frontline right now?*

- No! It is another piece of fake news. There are no fighters from Syria. There is no evidence, no proof. It has been planted by Armenian propaganda and circulates through different websites and media outlets. There is no need for this. Azerbaijan has a trained army and a vast mobilization reserve. Just yesterday, I announced partial mobilization; we are calling tens of thousands of reservists to arms. With a population of 10 million versus 2 million in Armenia, we do not need human resources. Therefore, we can stand up for ourselves and punish the aggressor to never venture even to look in our direction.

- *Thank you very much!*



## Joint Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**September 29, 2020**

On September 27, 2020, the armed forces of Armenia, in gross violation of the ceasefire regime, launched another aggression against Azerbaijan shelling the positions of the Republic of Azerbaijan along the line of contact from large-calibre weapons, mortars and artillery.

On September 27-29, as part of the ongoing military aggression of Armenia, along with the Tartar, Aghdam and Jabrayil districts of Azerbaijan, the Goranboy, Naftalan and Dashkesan districts were subjected to artillery fire by the armed forces of Armenia.

Armenia, in violation of the norms and principles of international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, deliberately shelled the civilian population and infrastructure of Azerbaijan, and thus committed various crimes against the civilian population.

As of September 29, 2020, 10 Azerbaijani civilians were killed, including two schoolchildren aged 13 and 14 respectively. 30 civilians were injured.

On 27 September 2020, circa 6 p.m., an artillery shell fired by the armed forces of Armenia, hit the courtyard of a private residential house in the village of Gashalty-Garagoyunlu, Naftalan district that belonged to a resident of the village Mr. Elbrus Isa oglu Gurbanov. As a result of the shell explosion, those present in the house – Mr. Gurbanov and 4 members of his family – were killed. The regional prosecutor's office has initiated a criminal case under Articles 120.2.1 (premeditated murder by a criminal organization), 120.2.4 (murder by a group of persons, previously committed by a group of persons with hooligan intentions, with particular cruelty), 120.2.7 (premeditated murder of two or more persons), 120.2.12 (premeditated murder with intent to national, racial, religious hatred or enmity), 100.2 (conduct of aggressive war) and other relevant articles of the Criminal Code.

As a result of intensive fire from large-calibre weapons, artillery and mortars by the armed forces of Armenia along the line of contact from the occupied territories of Aghdam region, a shell hit the Evoglu village of Aghdam district on September 28, 2020 circa 7 a.m. Mr. Joshgun Anver oglu Pashayev, born in 1979, was badly injured and died later at the hospital.

On September 28, 2020, circa 11 a.m., Mr. Mehman Sovet oglu Aliyev, born in 1975, died from shell shrapnel near the administrative building of the District Court on Heydar Aliyev Avenue in Tartar. The driver of the ambulance Mr. Ganbar Asgar oglu Asadov, born in 1968, and police officer Mr. Fakhraddin Farman oglu Huseynov, born in 1994, and another resident of Tartar city Mr. Tural Firdovsi oglu Ibrahimov, born in 1991, were injured.

Circa 7 p.m., as a result of an artillery shell explosion in the yard of a multi-level apartment building built for the disabled and IDPs located in Shikharkh settlement of Tartar district, the residents of Tartar district Mr. Khalig Asif oglu Abbasov, born in 1981 and his brother Mr. Elshan Asif oglu Abbasov, born in 1987, as well as Mr. Sabit Usub oglu Asadov, born in 1981, were killed. Mr. Seymur Fuzuli oglu Mammadov, born in 1984, and Mr. Faig Malik oglu Mahmudov, born in 1989, were hospitalized with various injuries.

On 28 September 2020, circa 6:40 p.m., the armed forces of Armenia shelled the “Shamlig” area near the village of Jojuq Marjanli with large-calibre artillery. Village resident Mr. Hilal Murad oglu Hazila, born in 2000, was injured.

In all incidents, the regional prosecutor’s offices in charge launched official criminal investigations in accordance with the Criminal Code articles.

The prosecutor’s office personnel are taking all necessary investigative measures in combat conditions, including the appointment of relevant experts to determine the severity of human injuries and damage to civil infrastructure.

Five criminal cases were sent to the Investigation Department of the Prosecutor General’s Office to continue the investigation.

We strongly condemn these war crimes, for which Armenia bears the responsibility, and demand to put an end to attempts to target civilians and intimidate the peaceful population.

We call on the international community to strongly condemn the new aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan, shelling the Azerbaijani civilians and infrastructure, and to ensure that Armenia complies with its obligations under international law, as well as international humanitarian law.

## **Press release of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**October 1, 2020**

Armenian media reported that two journalists of the French newspaper “Le Monde” were injured in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

We would like to note that Armenia is organizing visits of journalists to the area of military operations, hence endangering the lives of foreign journalists and grossly violating international humanitarian law.

We remind that the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan officially stated on September 27, 2020 that the Army of Azerbaijan does not target the civilians and civilian infrastructure and, unlike the occupying Armenia, complies with the requirements of the provisions of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions during military operations.

The deliberate taking of foreign journalists to the dangerous zone clearly shows that the Armenian government ignores its obligations to ensure the safety of journalists and uses foreign journalists for its own propaganda purposes.

We appeal to foreign journalists to obtain the consent of the Azerbaijani side in connection with the visits to the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

## Appeal of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**October 4, 2020**

Appealing to the citizens of Armenian origin of our country living in residential areas situated close to the combat zone, the Military Command of Azerbaijan declares that the Azerbaijan Army does not target civilian population, civilian facilities and infrastructure

The targets of the Azerbaijan Army are firing positions, military facilities and military infrastructure in the occupied territories. In this regard, we call on the civilian population living in these areas to stay away from the combat zone.

We declare that we will create the appropriate conditions for them not to suffer from the heavy fighting and to be evacuated from this area without hindrance. Civilians will be treated in accordance with the requirements of the Geneva Convention and their human rights will be protected.

## Press release of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**October 4, 2020**

On October 4, 2020 the armed forces of Armenia continued targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure in Tartar city, as well as Horadiz city of Fuzuli district with rocket fires. The second biggest city of Azerbaijan, Ganja was under rocket fire from the territory of Armenia.

As a result of the deliberate shelling by Armenia, until now 22 Azerbaijani civilians, including 2 schoolchildren were killed and 74 injured.

The purposeful targeting of civilians and civilian objects by Armenia is a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law. Despite numerous warnings by the Azerbaijani side, including via the relevant international organizations, the continuation of the targeted attacks on civilians by the armed forces of Armenia is a clear demonstration of the purposeful killing of innocent people and continuation of the aggression policy of Armenia.

We underline that this military provocation by Armenia is aimed at the conscious worsening of the situation on the ground and demonstrates the intention of Armenia to enlarge the zone of hostilities and scope of military operations. The Armed Forces of Azerbaijan will take adequate countermeasures to protect its civilians.

We urge Armenia to obey norms and principles of international law, including its obligations under the international humanitarian law, and implement the demands of the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council for immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. We reiterate that full responsibility for the deterioration of the situation in the region lies on the leadership of Armenia.

## Excerpts from the interview of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev to the CNN-Türk TV channel

**October 7, 2020**

- Mr. President, I would like to return to the processes in the zone of operations again. As we know, the Armenian army began shelling Azerbaijani cities outside the conflict zone with ballistic missiles. In particular, it is targeting settlements in the second largest city of Azerbaijan, Ganja, a power plant in Mingachevir with ballistic missiles. What do you think was the goal?

- In my opinion, this is a sign of helplessness of the Armenian army and the crimes of the military-political leadership of Armenia because violence against civilians, the shelling of settlements and the destruction of peaceful cities with ballistic missiles is considered a war crime. This indicates that Armenia cannot resist us on the battlefield. Losing the battle and in an effort to stop us, and in order to harm the civilian population as much as possible, it resorts to such heinous acts. As you noted, Ganja and Mingachevir are cities that are far from the war zone. At the same time, our cities located near the front zone are bombarded every day. The nearest district is Tartar. From one to two thousand shells are dropped on the city of Tartar every day. The main purpose of this is violence against civilians. This once again demonstrates the fascist essence of Armenia, the fascist essence of its regime. But this does not frighten the Azerbaijani people and has no impact whatsoever. Our citizens living in these regions, in these cities and villages stand firmly. They say: long live the Motherland, may our lands be liberated from occupation as soon as possible. They will remain in these places to the end and will provide our army with moral support.

- If Armenia continues shelling civilian settlements, will there be any change in your current position?

- No, there should be no change in our position. We are not fighting against the Armenian people. I have already spoken about this many times. Our struggle is a fair struggle. We want to restore our territorial integrity, we are doing this and we have achieved success in this matter and in this direction. Azerbaijan has never fought against the civilian population and against civilians. The other day I said that we have no problems with the Armenian people. Thousands of Armenians live in Azerbaijan, and they are our citizens. The Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh today are also our citizens. All our targets are military. We have every right to destroy military targets because they have caused great damage to our army and cities. Therefore, our duty is to destroy them and ensure the safety of our population.

- Armenia's bombardment of civilian settlements with ballistic missiles is essentially a war crime, an act contrary to the Geneva Convention. In this context, do you plan to put forward any initiatives regarding war crimes before the UN? Do you collect evidence of these crimes on the ground?

- We certainly do. All of their war crimes are already being recorded. Unfortunately, the international community did not react to the war crimes that were committed against Azerbaijan and our people earlier. The Khojaly massacre is an act of genocide that took place in front of the whole world. However, the then military-political leadership of Armenia was not held accountable for this. The destruction of our cities and villages, the appearance of more than a million internally displaced persons – the international community did not take any action in this regard. Therefore, this issue has not been resolved for many years because no distinction is made between the occupier and the victim of the occupation. And the shelling of our cities and villages by the Armenian armed forces with ballistic missiles today is a war crime. The leadership of Armenia, of course, must and will bear responsibility for this.

- *So far you have received several calls for a ceasefire. You have personally answered them. But looking at the 30-year history of the conflict, do you think that these calls will produce results?*

- I believe that these calls should not be just calls for a ceasefire. We have repeatedly said that sanctions should have been applied to the occupying state of Armenia. If sanctions had been applied in due time, then, perhaps, this issue would have been resolved long ago. Very serious pressure should have been put on Armenia – not in word but in deed. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Therefore, this process dragged on for 30 years. Negotiations that have been fruitless for 30 years are already losing their point. In addition, recently, the military-political leadership of Armenia, both with aggressive actions and aggressive statements, disrupted the process of negotiations. In other words, it dealt a crushing blow to the talks. To say that “Karabakh is Armenia” essentially means an end to the negotiations because the essence of the negotiations is that the occupied lands should be gradually and on a step-by-step basis returned to Azerbaijan. This is reflected in the basic principles. To say that “Karabakh is Armenia” actually means an end to this process. There were other similar statements. After that, in July, Armenia attacked Azerbaijan in the direction of the state border, killing many soldiers and one civilian. Therefore, the restoration of the ceasefire must be ensured on certain conditions. First of all, we should be given a schedule for the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied lands. We have already communicated our position on this issue to the Minsk Group. I hope that our calls and proposals will not remain unanswered.

- *I think that speaking about the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, France should be mentioned separately. What can you say in connection with France's position on this issue?*

- I have already spoken about this several times. We have always perceived the Minsk Group as a group, and this is still the case today. We believed that the co-chair countries of this group should remain neutral, not support any of the parties, because otherwise their mediation mission would be called into question. Until recent events, they managed to maintain neutrality to a certain extent. We know that the Armenian lobby is strong in these countries. It can and does influence the governments of these countries. We see today that the Armenians living in various countries are conducting an organized black propaganda campaign against Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, some countries have recently demonstrated a lop-sided position. There were cases of support for one of the parties. This is unacceptable. We have expressed our position on this matter. If mediators want to remain mediators and continue to deal with this issue, then they should be more responsible and not take sides. They should try to take actions intended to resolve this issue so that the conflict is resolved as soon as possible, so that the ceasefire can then be restored and a lasting peace can be established.

- *Why did you say that French President Emmanuel Macron should apologize?*

- You also know that there have been accusations against us. Official statements said that Azerbaijan and Turkey had allegedly transferred members of terrorist groups to the region even though there is no evidence of that. Ten days have passed since those statements. So far, we have not been presented with any evidence. This is injustice to us. These statements were made on the basis of false information. This was said either on the basis of unverified and unconfirmed information or on purpose. It is hard to say. In any case, each country must defend itself. Naturally, we are responding to injustice against us. We cannot but react to this. There was another statement – “Azerbaijan wants to conquer Nagorno-Karabakh”. This statement is also completely contrary to international laws because Nagorno-Karabakh is our land. How can a country conquer its own land? Such statements

completely contradict the mandate of the Minsk Group. We just want the internally displaced persons who have been expelled from their native lands for about 30 years to return to their homes so that the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is ensured. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is as important as the territorial integrity of other countries.

- *Mr. President, a few days before the start of the operation, you made an appeal to the leaders attending the UN General Assembly in New York, the United States. You appealed to the whole world. In your speech, you said that some terrorist groups were being sent to Armenia, and you drew attention to this issue. You emphasized, in particular, the need to pay attention to this issue. Three days after this statement, Armenia launched an offensive against Azerbaijan. What intelligence does Azerbaijan have on this issue today?*

- In that speech, I also said that Armenia is preparing for a new war, we have information about this and Armenia must be stopped. As for the existence of camps of terrorist organizations in Armenia, we had these data before.

- *What are these terrorist groups?*

- First of all, there were camps of PKK terrorist groups in the Azerbaijani lands occupied by Armenia. We have new intelligence information – some of it has already been published in the media. There are already documents and audio information about their negotiations and contacts. This question did not raise any doubts in us because Armenia is a terrorist country. During the first Karabakh war, dozens of terrorist acts were committed against us – in the metro, buses, ships. I believe that the world should recognize the Armenian terror as a disgusting fact known in the world. The man who committed the terrorist act in the French airport in the 1980s was subsequently handed over to Armenia, then released and declared a hero. Therefore, terrorists from various countries flock to Armenia these days. According to our information, Armenians and representatives of other nationalities from the Middle East flock to Armenia to participate in the unjust war against Azerbaijan.

- *I would like to return to the topic of the OSCE Minsk Group. Russia is one of its co-chairs. What are your expectations from Russia in the region?*

- Russia as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group also carries out a mediation mission, of course. We have no problem with this. At the same time, Russia is the only country among the three co-chair countries that is our neighbour. Naturally, we have long-term historical relations with Russia. At present, Russia is developing ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is a very important fact. Therefore, there are no problems either in the bilateral format or within the Minsk Group. During these events, Russia's position has been responsible.

- *Mr. President, what is Iran's position on this issue?*

- Iranian officials have supported Azerbaijan's just cause. A few days ago, Iranian officials said that the occupation must be stopped, the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be restored and our IDPs must return to their native lands. This is a fair position.

- *Have you had any contact with US President Donald Trump in this process? Do you consider the presence of the United States in it important?*

- America is also a co-chair of the Minsk Group. Together with two other co-chairs, they participate in these affairs. I had no contact with the President of America. However, high-ranking US officials have naturally expressed their opinion on this issue and in connection with these events. At the same time, the distinguished Donald Trump also made a statement on this matter. I believe that his statement was complete and logical. Our bilateral ties with America are developing successfully. In many areas, we act as partners. Naturally, America as a superpower expresses its position on this issue. We are satisfied with their position as well.

*- In July, Armenia attacked the city of Tovuz. Now, in the course of this operation, it strikes at civilian sites and settlements again. You have already said that Armenia is doing this in order to drag Azerbaijan into a provocation. Apart from being drawn into a provocation, does the shelling of these settlements, in particular the city of Tovuz, the Mingachevir power plant and other similar targets, pose a threat to energy security in the region? Can this be viewed as a transformation of energy infrastructure into a target? In particular, I mean the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the TANAP project. What is your take on that?*

- This, of course, is also one of Armenia's goals. They did not even conceal this, and the statements of the Armenian leadership before these events indicated that they intended to strike at our strategic energy infrastructure – pipelines, as well as the Sangachal oil and gas terminal, one of the largest oil and gas terminals in the world. In fact, one of the reasons for the Tovuz events was precisely this – to occupy new Azerbaijani lands, then strengthen their positions at the negotiating table and, at the same time, either approach our strategic energy communications or take them under control and then dictate their will to us. This is always part of the plans of the Armenian state. They don't conceal that. The strike on the Mingachevir power plant is also an integral part of this plan because it is the largest plant not only in Azerbaijan but also throughout the entire South Caucasus. Even though we have built many stations in recent years, the Mingachevir station today is our largest station providing electricity to a significant part of the country. If it failed, then certain problems could have arisen in relation to energy issues, of course. Today Azerbaijan exports crude oil, natural gas and electricity. We export our surplus electricity. These actions were aimed at our economic potential and once again showed the whole world the criminal essence of Armenia and the Armenian regime.

*- Mr. Aliyev, how big is the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh?*

- Today there is not a single Azerbaijani in Nagorno-Karabakh. They have all been expelled from there. The entire Azerbaijani population was expelled both from the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and from seven districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh – in Soviet times, Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous region. In Soviet times, in the late 1980s, Azerbaijanis constituted 25 percent of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijanis accounted for 98 percent of the population of the city of Shusha. Shusha is our ancient historical city. At the first stage, all Azerbaijanis were expelled from Shusha, then from Khankandi, other cities and villages, and after that from seven districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh. Today, there is no Azerbaijani population in Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent occupied districts. We will now go back there. We already started going back four years ago. But after the end of this confrontation, we will, of course, return to these regions.

*- You said that Azerbaijanis were expelled from the occupied Karabakh lands. But at present, a large Armenian population also lives in other Azerbaijani lands. What can you say in this regard?*

- This is natural because there are representatives of many nationalities living in Azerbaijan. They live like one family. Azerbaijan is known as a multicultural country worldwide. This is acknowledged by

the United Nations, as well as other international organizations operating in the humanitarian field. Azerbaijan is the land of tolerance, ethnic and religious tolerance. Thousands of Armenians live in our country today and they are our citizens. They also live normally, like all other nationalities. Of course, I am sure that after the end of this war and conflict, the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh today will live with us. Azerbaijan is a multinational country. This has been the case throughout history. I think this is our great advantage.

Representatives of other nationalities do not live in Armenia. Armenia is one of a handful of countries in the world where 99 percent of the population is Armenian. All other nationalities were expelled from there. First of all, the Azerbaijanis were expelled, then the rest. Armenia is a mono-ethnic state, and this once again proves that it is a racist country. Representatives of no other nationality can live there. They are either unable to withstand the torment and leave or they are expelled by force.

*- Dear President, I have a few more questions left, let me ask them. If we come back to the topic related to the theatre of operations, has there been a difference after the inclusion of unmanned aerial vehicles and armed unmanned aerial vehicles in the arsenal of the Azerbaijani Army?*

- There is a big difference. Armed unmanned aerial vehicles made in Turkey are a type of weapon created on the basis of the latest and modern technologies, only a few countries in the world have such capabilities. This is a manifestation of the technological, economic and intellectual potential of Turkey. Of course, the possession of such opportunities facilitates our work and saves the lives of our citizens, soldiers, because without them we would have to strike at tanks, cannons and other Armenian equipment from the ground. And this could lead to great human losses. These vehicles give us a great advantage in keeping human losses low. At the same time, they are technologically advanced.

*- By the way, speaking of air defence systems, the Armenian side has, in particular, such modern air defence systems as S-300 which it had acquired from Russia. The Azerbaijani Army also has defence systems, but not these weapons. Do you think this creates a double standard?*

- No, we have anti-aircraft guns for S-300 which we bought from Russia. We have purchased a large amount of weapons from Russia. There are no restrictions in that area. Therefore, I cannot speak of double standards. The only difference is that we buy them and they are very expensive systems. Armenia often receives them free of charge – either as a gift or as a loan. But this loan remains on paper and is never repaid. Naturally, if this expensive armament had not been provided to Armenia free of charge, then Armenia's possession of it could not even be a subject of discussion and the conflict would have been settled long ago. The free armament has instilled confidence in them that they would be able to hold these lands under occupation forever. The difference is this. We have the opportunity to acquire weapons from Russia. We buy weapons from other countries as well. There are no restrictions on this issue. There are some countries that have imposed an embargo on the sale of weapons to us but this does not create any particular problems for us because the arms market is now more diversified and its geography is expanding. I recently said that the Turkish defence industry is developing so rapidly today that, I hope our equipment with Turkish weapons will rise to an even higher level in the future.

*- My last question, dear President. If the prime minister of Armenia Pashinyan were in front of you instead of me now, what would you tell him?*



- Basically I have nothing to say to him. We have met many times. Two years ago, in our first contacts after he came to power, I think we had a very good conversation. I had hopes that he, as the new prime minister, would introduce amendments and changes to Armenia's aggressive policy and understand that as long as this conflict remains unresolved, peace will not come to this region. As a person who came to power as a result of a coup and made big promises, he will not be able to fulfill them if the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia are not normalized. And then there is no need to talk about the economic development of Armenia. I was hoping that he understood this and the first messages from Armenia were very positive. We showed restraint taking into account their request, and strengthened the ceasefire. It is possible to say that the ceasefire was rigorously observed in the last two years. The Minsk Group co-chairs also noted this in their statements. But what happened next? We realized that he deceived us. I think that this is a very wrong path in politics. You can't lie. Our words do not differ from our deeds. But the words given to us turned out to be a lie. His words that "Karabakh is Armenia, full stop" actually put an end to the negotiations. After that, there were other provocative statements, including such that Azerbaijan should negotiate with Nagorno-Karabakh, i.e. the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic". This was a blow to the format of the negotiations. Not only we but also the Minsk Group opposed this. Then in July, they carried out a military provocation in Tovuz, in August they sent a sabotage group and last month they already carried out a large-scale offensive. Therefore, I have said everything to him. Addressing the Armenian people, I want to say that they should hold their government accountable, demand that it stop the fire, end the occupation, not send their children to war, do not send them to Azerbaijan because the so-called "army of the Nagorno-Karabakh republic" consists of citizens of Armenia by 90 percent. In other words, there is no such thing as the "army of Nagorno-Karabakh". Why should a person born in Armenia fight against us on Azerbaijani soil? Therefore, I want to tell the Armenian people that the Armenians live in peace today and will continue to live in Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani state is doing everything possible for their normal life. I want to tell the Armenian leadership: the sooner you leave the occupied lands, the better it will be for you.

## Interview of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev to Euronews TV channel

**October 7, 2020**

- *Joining us now is the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. Thank you for your time. There has been strong and repeated international pressure for a ceasefire and to de-escalate tensions. Fighting is ongoing, if not escalating. What is your objective now in the conflict?*

- Ceasefire cannot be achieved unilaterally. It must be a bilateral decision and also it must be implemented on the ground. As you know Armenia attacked us on the 27th of September, attacking our military positions and damaging our infrastructure, attacking civilians. So far we have almost 30 civilians killed as a result of Armenian attack, including the ballistic missiles, and the cluster bombs. So, our counter-attack was successful. We managed to liberate part of the occupied territories and our main objective is restoration of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Armenia must give us the time-table for withdrawal of their troops from the occupied territories and this time-table must be approved by the Minsk Group co-chairs, the countries which are mediators. And after that I think the effort must be imposed on achieving the ceasefire.

- *The countries that you're referencing have repeatedly asked for a ceasefire. Why isn't that happening now? Why aren't you pushing for that to happen immediately?*

- Because we have been a subject of attack for many times. During the last three months there have been three attacks on Azerbaijan. One in July, on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, far away from the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The goal of Armenia was to occupy new territories of Azerbaijan. They did not manage to do it. Our army defeated them. Then, on August 23, they send a sabotage group to commit terror acts against our civilians and military personnel. That also was a failure for them, because the head of the sabotage group was detained and he gives evidences exactly about what I am saying. And in the end of September they launched a massive attack on our villages and cities. I can tell you that up to today we have almost 900 houses totally demolished, or damaged and many casualties and wounded people among civilians. And now after Armenia is suffering a very bitter defeat, they are pleading for a ceasefire. They made violation of ceasefire themselves. They ignore United Nations Security Council resolutions which demand full, complete, immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops. They want to keep status-quo unchanged, and the Minsk Group co-chairs United States, Russia and France, their presidents many times made the statements that the status-quo is unacceptable. Armenia ignored it, but now Azerbaijan itself is changing the status-quo, and I think that it will be an important step towards the soonest resolution of the conflict.

- *Mr. President, civilians have been killed on both sides of this conflict. How do you reconcile that with your aims?*

- Of course, we regret that civilians are being killed and of course we were not the source of this attack. Because it was a first thing in the morning on the 27th of September, what they did, they attacked our cities and villages. And we had to respond. But our response mainly is and primarily is on their military positions, on their tanks and guns and what we are doing on the battlefield is available in internet. Our drones and our other equipment demolished only military objectives on the occupied territories. Unfortunately, Armenia is using civilians in order to have more people on the ground, because their demographic situation is very bad, and we have video about these civilians being just next to the guns, and of course...

*- I'm sorry to interject Mr. President, that civilians on their side have been killed in this fighting and they would dispute exactly why it was on the 27th of September this violence flared up again. Let me bring you to a promise that your foreign minister made last year that said it was necessary to take concrete measures to prepare the populations for peace. What we are seeing right now is the opposite of that. How are you trying to limit the suffering of civilians?*

- You know we are not responsible for this outbreak. As I said, we were a subject of a physical attack from Armenian army which is situated on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Above from that, the current Armenian regime did everything in order to destroy the negotiation process. Exactly one year ago, Armenian prime minister at the rally in the occupied area of Azerbaijan made a statement that 'Karabakh is Armenia' and that statement actually destroyed negotiation process. Because the principles which are on the table and which are the basis for settlement demand the return of the occupied territories to Azerbaijan. And when Armenian prime minister says that not a centimetre of land will return to Azerbaijan, when he says that 'Karabakh is Armenia', when they organize illegal settlement of foreign people on the occupied territories which is a brutal violation of Geneva Convention, they destroy negotiation process. After that, in order to make us responsible for that, they attack us three times-on July, August, and September. When we beat them on the battlefield, they call everywhere, they make a plea to everyone, 'stop Azerbaijan'. We want to stop, but we want the occupation to stop. Therefore, the main message should be to Armenia, we are not on Armenian land, we are on our land. Our land for 27 years...

*- One thing that Armenia will say is that Turkey is really providing quite a strong influence, including supplying things like military aid. To what extent would you say Turkey is accelerating and pushing your country and your actions in this conflict?*

- This is absolutely false information. Turkey for us is a strong ally, partner and brotherly country, and of course the statements expressed their position and we are very grateful to Turkish government, to Turkish President, Turkish people for this support. But Turkey in no other way is involved in this conflict. Armenia bringing such fake news to the media wants to diminish the capacity of Azerbaijani Army. We are fighting ourselves. Yes, we purchased weapons from Turkey, but not only. Our main supplier of weapons is not Turkey. And probably everybody knows about that. So, the fact that we buy modern Turkish equipment including the fighter drones should not be a problem for anyone. Because Armenia gets weapons free of charge. We pay for them and Armenia gets free of charge. Turkey in no other way is involved in the conflict.

*- We keep talking about weapons and we keep talking about fighting here. Is diplomacy still an option? Will you sit down, have talks with the prime minister of Armenia to find a different way out of this conflict?*

- I can tell you, that during my term as the president, I had maybe tens of talks with two former Armenian presidents and the current prime minister. During those previous debates we made a substantial progress on negotiation table. We elaborated the principles which today are the basis for the settlement of conflict. And we were constructive. Negotiations are taking place since 1992. Can you imagine? For almost 30 years. And we were living with hopes, mediators were telling us that you should wait a little bit, there will be more constructive approach from Armenian side. But when this prime minister came to power, as a result of the coup d'état two years ago, he destroyed completely negotiation process. And I had meetings with him many times. But these meetings were absolutely senseless. And he told me that they are not going to give the territories back, they told me that Nagorno-Karabakh must be, how to say, adjusted to Armenia. So this is absolutely unacceptable

demand on me, and also unacceptable for mediators. Armenian government should change its position, should refrain from maximalist position, should stop telling that Karabakh is Armenia because this is not true and this is destroying negotiations process and of course, we are going back. By the way, tomorrow, our foreign minister will be in Geneva, meeting with the ambassadors of the Minsk Group. And as far as I know, Armenian foreign minister was supposed to go there in the beginning of the month, but he ignored that. He is not there. Our foreign minister is there. It shows who wants negotiations and who wants just accusations against Azerbaijan.

- *President Aliyev, thank you for joining us on this special program on Euronews. Thank you very much for your time.*

- Thank you.

## **Excerpts from the statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov at the Online Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement “Bandung+65: More Relevant, United and Effective NAM against Emerging Global Challenges, including COVID-19”**

**October 9, 2020**

The objective of ensuring a peaceful, just and prosperous world is hardly achievable if the universally accepted fundamental values, norms and principles, including those enshrined at the UN Charter and Bandung Declaration, are overtly disregarded and misinterpreted so as to whitewash aggressions and other illegal actions.

In breach of norms and principles which laid the foundation of the United Nations and our Movement, Armenia has been occupying for almost 30 years now one-fifth of internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. As a result of military aggression by Armenia, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were forcefully expelled from their homes and became internally displaced persons. In clear violation of the UN Charter Armenia has been disregarding 4 UN Security Council resolutions which demand immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from the territories of Azerbaijan.

In the past 27 years since the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions, Armenia has not only disregarded the demands of the Security Council, but systematically and deliberately pursued the goal of securing the annexation of the occupied territories. This included, among others, implantation of settlers into the occupied territories, destruction, pillage and looting of historical and cultural heritage, illegal exploitation of natural resources, misappropriation of private and public property in the seized lands.

Armenia frequently resorted to military and other provocations against Azerbaijan that undermined the peace process and rendered the negotiations meaningless. Prime Minister Pashinyan’s statement that “Karabakh is Armenia” was a serious blow to the efforts for finding a political solution to the conflict. Over the past two months, the accumulation of a large number of weapons along the frontline accompanied by intensified subversive activities deep inside the territory of Azerbaijan was indicative of Armenia’s preparation for a new act of aggression. We duly informed the international community about this growing threat by calling for restricting relationship with Armenia and persuading him to refrain from taking such a dangerous path.

Following the aggression by Armenia on September 27, 2020 which caused casualties among civilians and military servicemen of Azerbaijan, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan was obliged to undertake counter-offensive measures within the right of self-defence and in full compliance with the international humanitarian law in order to ensure the security of densely populated residential areas deep inside the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan.

On the following days, having faced a series of defeats on the battlefield, Armenia resorted to terror and launched continuous missile attacks on densely populated cities of Azerbaijan far from the frontline, including Ganja - the second largest city of Azerbaijan and Mingachevir - the city that hosts the biggest water reservoir in the South Caucasus. As a result, tens of civilians were killed and seriously injured, critical civilian infrastructure, including medical and educational facilities, were either destroyed or seriously damaged.

The obvious goal of Armenia is to terrorize the civilian population and spread panic within Azerbaijani society in a blatant violation of international humanitarian law. Armenia also deliberately attempts to expand the geography of the conflict to engage the third parties into the conflict despite numerous statements by Azerbaijan at the highest level that the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan do not have targets in the territory of Armenia. Azerbaijan acts in its sovereign soil within the limits of self-defence.

In this situation, when Armenia clearly disregards the norms and principles of international law, undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, grossly violates international humanitarian law by deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, it is incumbent on the international community more than ever to demonstrate principled position and express its solidarity with Azerbaijan in its just struggle to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and protect its population.

Considering the exceptional importance and urgency of the matter Azerbaijan has initiated a special declaration of the Ministerial Meeting in connection with the recent armed attack of Armenia against Azerbaijan the draft of which has been broadly consulted among the Member States. I use this opportunity to express my gratitude to all Member States for their active engagement and contributions during the consideration of the draft declaration which reaffirms NAM's principled support to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and to the settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Once adopted, it will further strengthen NAM's principled stance on solidarity with the Republic of Azerbaijan in support of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

There is still a chance to resolve the conflict by political means. Armenia must recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and withdraw its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in accordance with a clear timetable. The solution of the conflict is possible only on the basis of the respect to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

**Letter dated 17 October 2020 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic H.E. Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation H.E. Mr. Sergey V. Lavrov and Secretary of State of the United States of America H.E. Mr. Michael Richard Pompeo**

I am writing to draw your attention to heinous war crimes, crimes against humanity and state terror the political military leadership of Armenia continues to perpetrate against the People of Azerbaijan.

Despite the humanitarian ceasefire declared on October 10 under the mediation of the Russian Federation, Armenia grossly violated its commitments from the very first minutes. In addition to its attempts to attack on Azerbaijani military to regain control over positions it has lost during counter-offensive operations of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia continues to subject large residential settlements of Azerbaijan to bombardment, including with ballistic missiles launched both from its own territory and occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Armenia does not even spare medical and educational facilities and other civilian infrastructure aiming at spreading maximum level of fear and panic among the civilian population of Azerbaijan.

The new phase of aggression of Armenia started on September 27, 2020 has already led to 60 casualties among civilians, while 270 were seriously wounded. 29 civilians have lost their lives, while 102 civilians got serious injuries only during the humanitarian ceasefire declared on October 10.

Large cities, such as Tartar, Aghdam, Minghachevir, Goranboy are under constant shelling of armed forces of Armenia with ballistic missiles and heavy artillery, despite the formal humanitarian ceasefire.

Ganja, the second largest city of Azerbaijan located away from the conflict zone was heavily bombarded with Elbrus/SCUD ballistic missiles from the territory of Armenia on October 11 and October 17. On October 11, 10 civilians were killed, more than 30 were wounded as a result of bombardment. According to preliminary results of ongoing investigation, ballistic missile bombardment at night of October 17 killed 13 civilians, including two children, while more than 60 civilians were seriously wounded.

Night time attack with missiles of such a high devastating capacity and precision leaves no doubt that the strikes on the city of Ganja and other residential areas of Azerbaijan are conducted deliberately with the aim of inflicting mass casualties among the civilians.

This constitutes a war crime, a crime against humanity and an act of state terror. Such a brazen violation of international humanitarian law necessitates most urgent response from entire international community.

It should be stressed that all these ballistic missile attacks are launched from the territory of Armenia, which leaves no doubt about the essence of state policy of Armenia and its intentions to provoke Azerbaijan for response attack, thus creating a pretext for the engagement of third parties into the conflict. The Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan conducting counter-offensive operation to thwart attacks of the aggressor and ensure security of the Azerbaijani population act on the sovereign soil of the Republic of Azerbaijan in full compliance with international law, UN Charter and international humanitarian law.

When the political military leadership of Armenia demonstrate overt disrespect to fundamental values of humanity, it is a testing time for entire international community to stand united and condemn Armenia's crimes against humanity.

At this critical historical moment, when the People of Azerbaijan pursues just struggle for its honour, freedom, independence and sovereignty, we expect the entire international community to demonstrate in words and deeds that justice indeed is not compromised. It is incumbent on all responsible members of international community to be on the right side of history by urging Armenia to cease its criminal activities and taking all necessary measures under international law as well as international humanitarian law to bring all perpetrators of these heinous crimes into justice.

It is within this understanding that I appeal to you with an urgent request of issuing strong public statement condemning Armenia's deliberate attacks on civilian Azerbaijani population, urging this state to cease its aggression and fully comply with its obligations under international law, including the humanitarian law, and withdraw its armed forces, as well as mercenaries and foreign terrorists fighting on its side from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**



## Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**October 17, 2020**

On the night of October 17, 2020 around 1 am the armed forces of Armenia attacked the Ganja city of Azerbaijan with ballistic missiles. This, third in a row atrocious attack on the second biggest city of Azerbaijan, since the new aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan, situated far away from the frontline, caused serious civilian casualties: 12 civilians, including two minors killed, more than 40 people injured.

Armenia's deliberate and indiscriminate targeting of civilians, in a blatant violation of norms and principles of international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as declared humanitarian ceasefire, constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity and the leadership of Armenia bears full responsibility for this crime. Continuous aggression of Armenia, cruel attacks on the civilians must be stopped and the international community should not turn a blind eye to these inhuman acts by Armenia against the people of Azerbaijan.

We condemn in the strongest manner vicious attacks by Armenia against the Azerbaijani civilians and urge this aggressor state to stop its war crimes.

The political-military leadership of Armenia, using terror as the state policy, bears responsibility for giving an order on the rocket shelling the peaceful population. The Republic of Azerbaijan declares that based on the national and international law mechanisms the perpetrators of this crime will be brought to justice.

## Press release of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**October 18, 2020**

Azerbaijan showing once again its goodwill based on the principles of humanism agreed to a humanitarian ceasefire from October 18, 2020.

The armed forces of Armenia immediately after the declared ceasefire, starting from 00.02 local time fired at the Jabrayil city, as well as the villages of Jabrayil district liberated from the occupation, located along the river Araz using mortars and artillery. From 00.05 until 03.25 am the armed forces of Armenia violating the ceasefire shelled the positions of Azerbaijan using the large-calibre weapons at the border of two states in the direction of Gadabay and Tovuz regions of Azerbaijan. Retaining the situation tense during the night on the front despite the agreed truce, the armed forces of Armenia attempted to attack in the directions of Aghdara, Fuzuli, Hadrut and Jabrayil at 07.00 am.

The gross violation of the humanitarian ceasefire by Armenia, already for the second time after its formal declaration demonstrates the continuation of the aggressive policy of Armenia against Azerbaijan and its reluctance to the negotiated settlement of the conflict. It is also an open disrespect by Armenia to the efforts of the mediators, who have been engaged in finding an accord of the sides to the humanitarian ceasefire.

Azerbaijan remains committed to the humanitarian ceasefire, however, Azerbaijan reserves its right to take counter measures to protect its civilians and positions.

## Excerpts from the interview of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev to TASS news agency

**October 19, 2020**

- Good afternoon. We are in Baku today to meet with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. My name is Yulia Sharifulina and, on behalf of TASS, I will ask the President several questions on the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh.

- Mr. President, thank you for agreeing to receive us. I understand that you have recently given several interviews to the media but the situation is changing fast and we observe it literally every day. We would like, of course, to dwell more on some basic issues, which, perhaps, are beyond time and which will help our audience to better understand the position of your country. We all witnessed the 11-hour negotiating marathon in Moscow. Do you think it is still possible to return to the fulfillment of the achieved peace or has it failed completely?

- We remain true to the commitments within the framework of contacts with our partners. From the very beginning and in the process of negotiations on the settlement of the conflict, we have always relied on international law, on our adherence to the resolution of the conflict by peaceful means, including the commitments Azerbaijan took upon itself after the talks in Moscow, which we aspired to and were going to implement. Unfortunately, Armenia flagrantly violated the ceasefire. Less than 24 hours after the talks, the city of Ganja was attacked. Residential areas of the sleeping city of Ganja were targeted deliberately. After the first attack – and there were two of them – the death toll was very high. In other words, Armenia violated the ceasefire in a defiant manner. Thus, it demonstrated disrespect for mediators, disrespect for the commitments it had assumed after such long negotiations in Moscow. Prior to that, after the terms of the ceasefire for the exchange of bodies, prisoners and hostages had been agreed, Armenia had also violated the ceasefire on the battlefield. However, this seemed insufficient for them and they attacked the city of Ganja. In fact, two days ago, they did the same and again at night. This is a very heinous crime. This is international terrorism. The unanimous condemnation of this bloody crime by the world community means that they will not get away with it. The UN Secretary General, the European Union and many countries at the national level have condemned this act of international terrorism.

It is not our fault that the situation is still in the hot phase. I have repeatedly said that Azerbaijan is committed to the principles of settlement. These principles have been developed over the many years of negotiations. I have confirmed in my speeches and in recent contacts with the media that if Armenia acts constructively in the process of negotiations, we are ready to suspend military operations as early as tomorrow. However, the statements we have been hearing from Yerevan completely contradict the basic principles developed by the OSCE Minsk Group. The Armenian leadership has recently made very dangerous statements that effectively refute the basic principles. In principle, all the activities of Armenia's new leadership are aimed at disrupting the process of negotiations. Not to undermine this process, but to disrupt it. I have already talked about their numerous statements, provocative actions and attacks on Azerbaijan's civilian population. Therefore, if the Armenian side finally realizes that the path of military provocations leads them to disaster, we are ready to suspend military operations and resolve the issue at the negotiating table.

- *Mr. President, in the past 26 years the world could not understand what the final agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Karabakh might look like. How do you see this, and are any concessions still possible for the sake of peace?*

- You know, I want to say again that although the Minsk Group co-chairs have not achieved any result and are rightly criticized by the Azerbaijani public for that, I have to say as a person who has been dealing with this issue almost on a daily basis for the last 17 years and spending a huge amount of my time on finding solutions that the Minsk Group has been trying. It was providing proposals and did not stay idle. Therefore, I reject such unfounded accusations. This is not the case. During my contacts with the previous leadership of Armenia, with the previous two presidents, we took major steps forward. We made progress in agreeing on issues that seemed completely impossible to agree on. This was all based on the desire to achieve a result, the desire to reach a settlement through a compromise. It is a different matter though that at a certain stage, when we came too close to a settlement, the Armenian side took a step back. This is also a fact although they have always tried to blame us for this. But at the last moment they refused to return Kalbajar and Lachin. The other five districts had been agreed upon long ago and we were already discussing when Kalbajar and Lachin would be returned. So we were discussing the timing. Neither me nor the Minsk Group had any doubts that this issue had been resolved. I think the former co-chairs of the Minsk Group who were involved in this at the time can confirm this. But then the Armenian side took a step back, and the issue of transferring Kalbajar and Lachin hung in the air. In other words, a mechanism was proposed that involved these two districts forever remaining under Armenian control, which I categorically could not agree to.

Therefore, returning to what you asked, the Minsk Group has created a basis for a settlement. It consists in the de-occupation, the return of refugees, the opening of communications, the joint residence of the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities, which fully complies with the norms of both international law and human morality in general. Because when one of the Armenian presidents spoke about ethnic incompatibility of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, he once again demonstrated his fascist essence. Then how can Azerbaijanis and Armenians live together in Russia, have a common business and mixed families there? How can Armenians and Azerbaijanis live together in some Georgian villages and celebrate both Muslim and Christian holidays? How do thousands of Armenians live with dignity in Azerbaijan as our citizens? Therefore, such theses of fascist nature did not contribute to a settlement, of course.

So all the basic principles I have talked about plus the opening of communications form the basis. The Minsk Group co-chairs support the Azerbaijani position. But the current Armenian leadership took a different path. The prime minister said that not a centimetre of land would be given to Azerbaijan. They have published maps of the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic", which also included seven districts outside Nagorno-Karabakh. They have changed all the names of our cities and our villages. What we saw on the battlefield – it was not easy to break through these defence lines they had been building for 30 years – we saw that they were not going to give up these territories. Because so much had been invested there, so much had been invested in engineering communications and fortifications! This did not at all mean that they were going to leave these lands. When the hot phase of the conflict ends, we will provide full information about what they had built there.

## **Appeal of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**October 24, 2020**

The Azerbaijan Military Command, once again appealing to the civilian population living in residential areas situated close to the combat operations zone recommends staying away from military facilities and infrastructure in order to avoid injury.

At the same time, the Azerbaijan Military Command, appealing to the soldiers and volunteers who were deceived by the military-political leadership of Armenia and taken to the occupied territories of our country, offers to lay down their arms and surrender.

It should be pointed out that the command is ready to take all the necessary measures to ensure the security, food, medical care and other needs of the civilian population crossing to the Azerbaijani side.

In addition, all the rights of prisoners of war and civilians will be protected in accordance with International Humanitarian Law, and through international organizations the necessary conditions will be created for persons wishing to move to third countries.

## Excerpts from the interview of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev to Rai 1 TV channel

**October 26, 2020**

- *Mr. President, good afternoon. Please tell us if this new truce, this new ceasefire will hold. If I am not mistaken, this is the third ceasefire.*

- Everything will depend on how Armenia behaves because Armenia disrupted the first two ceasefires. After the first ceasefire, which was declared on humanitarian grounds, Armenia violated the ceasefire within 24 hours and barbarically launched a ballistic missile at the city of Ganja at night. As a result of the first shelling, ten people were killed, and many were wounded. Then they hit Ganja again, and also at night. There were even more victims. So we had to retaliate. As for the second truce, we have a chronology of Armenia's violations of the ceasefire. They violated it literally two minutes after the agreed hour of the truce. Today, at 8 o'clock, a new ceasefire came into force. Now it is 10 a.m. in Baku. At about 3-4 minutes after the ceasefire entered into force around 8 o'clock, several artillery shells were fired at the city of Tartar again. We are not reacting to this. We hope this was an accident, but we will be forced to respond adequately if this continues.

- *Mr. President, what actually caused the outbreak of hostilities at the end of September? Why did this happen?*

- There was a series of events of political and military nature. Armenia's main goal was to disrupt the process of negotiations in every possible way. Armenia's new government has repeatedly stated that the basic principles are unacceptable. It will not return a single centimetre of the occupied territories - which contradicts the basic principles. The prime minister stated that we should negotiate not with Armenia but with the so-called leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is unacceptable both for the OSCE Minsk Group and for us. He also stated that 'Karabakh is Armenia, full stop', thereby completely undermining the negotiations. In the past year, there were practically no negotiations. To shift the blame on us, Armenia made three subversion attempts – in July on the border, in August when they sent a subversion group, and in September when they bombarded our cities. They probably thought that we would show restraint again, but that did not happen. We answered them in a manner that they are now regretting it.

- *On what conditions you will agree to stop the hostilities then? You have repeatedly spoken about the need for a constructive approach on Armenia's part. What should a constructive approach be like?*

- A constructive approach should be that they must publicly declare, through the prime minister, that they accept the basic principles. The basic principles envisage the return of seven districts located around the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region to Azerbaijan and the return of Azerbaijani refugees to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha. These approaches are, in principle, based on four UN Security Council resolutions, which require practically the same. But when the Armenian prime minister says that not a single centimetre of land will be returned to us, the Armenian defence minister says that Armenia will start a new war for new territories and when aggression is carried out against us, this is not a constructive approach, of course. He must say that yes, the occupied territories will be returned to Azerbaijan, that the Azerbaijanis will return to Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha. Then, of course, we will agree very quickly.

- *Mr. President, there is one very controversial issue. Some countries, not only Armenia but also France, have somehow accused you and Turkey of sending thousands of mercenaries, jihadists from Syria to Karabakh via Turkey. How will you respond to such accusations, and how will you respond to the allegations that speak of the presence of Turkish troops and Turkish military aircraft on the territory of Azerbaijan?*

- I have already answered this question many times, and I will answer it again. First, such unfounded accusations were brought against us by only two countries – France and Russia. France said that through the President, Russia, through the Head of the Foreign Intelligence Service. These charges were brought against us immediately after the outbreak of hostilities. Although almost a month has already passed, not a single piece of evidence, no proof was presented to us. For the first time, I will say this: I asked the French side for the heads of relevant agencies to meet, discuss the issue, and provide us with evidence. Nothing was presented to us. Therefore, these are all insinuations. All this is an attempt to cast a shadow on Azerbaijan. I regret that such unfounded accusations come from the co-chair countries, which are supposed to be objective. We do not talk every day about how many weapons are supplied from Russia to Armenia. We do mention the fact that Armenia would not have lasted a day in the occupied territories without external assistance. Political support, military support, moral support – all this comes from countries that are supposed to stay neutral. Therefore, we strongly reject these insinuations. It is not necessary. We have 100,000 soldiers in the regular army. If necessary, we will announce general mobilization, which, by the way, we have not done, unlike Armenia. Therefore, this is all lies and slander. As for the participation of Turkish troops in operations, this is another lie. There is not a single piece of evidence. The Turkish F-16s are in Azerbaijan due to our joint military exercises on the eve of the conflict. We do not talk about the number of Russian MIG-29s and Su-30s in Armenia. We do not talk about the fact that 5,000 Russian troops are stationed at the base in Armenia, in Gumry. According to our data, there are periodic weapons supplies of the Armenian armed forces from there. These are facts, in contrast to what is being said about us. Therefore, I suggest that those who want to accuse us should first deal with their matters before jumping to such hasty conclusions based on false information.

- *Mr. President, the very last question: at what level will we be in this conflict in one year? Or will it already be resolved by then?*

- You know, I communicate with representatives of foreign media almost every day during this month, and in my addresses, to the Azerbaijani people, I always clearly state our position. We see the future of the Karabakh region – not only the highland part of it but also the midland because Karabakh is a large part of Azerbaijan – as a prosperous and peaceful territory. And Azerbaijanis that must return there and the Armenians who now live there will coexist in peace. Our position is this. I believe that this can be achieved with the mutual goodwill of the parties. After all, thousands of Armenians live in Baku and other cities of Azerbaijan today. The Azerbaijanis and Armenians have joint businesses in Russia and Georgia. There are mixed families. Therefore, I think that reconciliation is possible. The Armenian leadership should simply abandon its aggressive policy. And if this happens, with our investments and development experience, we can turn this region into one of the world's most prosperous regions. But for this to happen, the consequences of the war must be eliminated. The consequences of the occupation must be eliminated. The Azerbaijanis must return to the lands they have lived for centuries and live in harmony with the Armenian population. It will not be easy, and it will take time. But we know how countries were reconciled after World War II when European countries were at war – the current neighbours, and many people were killed. But this should not sit in the memory all the time and produce hatred, which is what the Armenian ideologists are doing today. Goodwill must be shown. If that happens, what I am saying will happen. If not, we will return these lands under any circumstances. And the current state of affairs on the battlefield is showing that. We will return them at any cost. Either peacefully or through war, but we will get the lands back. Therefore, I think the Armenian leadership should seriously think about it and take the right step.

## **Letter dated 27 October 2020 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Executive Director of the UNICEF H.E. Ms. Henrietta Fore**

I am writing to draw your attention to serious violations by Armenia of international human rights and humanitarian law with respect to protection of children in the context of its ongoing aggression against Azerbaijan.

On September 27, 2020 the armed forces of Armenia blatantly violating the ceasefire regime have launched another act of aggression against Azerbaijan, by intensively attacking the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan along the frontline using large-calibre weapons, mortar launchers and artillery.

In order to repel military aggression by Armenia and ensure the security of civilians and densely populated residential areas deep inside the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan undertake counter-offensive measures. Azerbaijan acts on its sovereign soil within the right of self-defence and takes adequate and proportionate measures in full compliance with the international humanitarian law to thwart the imminent threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and security of its civilian population. Notwithstanding the attacks on civilian residential areas of Azerbaijan from the territory of Armenia, the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan demonstrate consistent restraint and take actions only against legitimate military targets.

Since the outbreak of hostilities and despite the humanitarian ceasefire formally declared on three occasions, namely on October 10, October 18 and October 26, Armenia has been continuing to deliberately targeting densely populated residential areas of Azerbaijan in a brazen attempt to take revenge for the defeat it faces on the battlefield.

It should be particularly noted that as a direct consequence of ethnic cleansing conducted by Armenia, all civilian population has been expelled from the occupied territories along the line of contact under the control of the armed forces of Armenia and no infrastructure left therein, except military installations of Armenia. In sharp contrast, along the line of contact controlled by the armed forces of Azerbaijan there are densely populated residential areas. In addition, during past four weeks of ongoing military operations the civilian population residing in other parts of the occupied territories has already moved to Armenia.

Armenia clearly takes advantage of this situation and as a tactic of terror deliberately targets the residential settlements along the line of contact with the purpose of spreading panic within the Azerbaijani society. As a result of indiscriminate shelling of cities and villages of Azerbaijan, including those located far away from the conflict zone more than 60 civilians were killed and more than 300 were seriously wounded. These numbers are incomparably higher than the civilian casualties and damage alleged by the Armenian side. Yet, Armenia conducts massive smear campaign against Azerbaijan with disseminating fake pictures and spreading false accusations aiming at misleading the international community and escaping from responsibility for heinous war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Of particular relevance is to note that 11 children were killed and more than 30 were seriously wounded in the result of attacks of Armenia in gross violation of international humanitarian law, including the First Geneva Convention of 1949 and the First Additional Protocol thereto of 1977. Furthermore, more than 50 schools and kindergartens were destroyed or seriously damaged, thus affected the right to education of hundreds of children.

Bombardment of Ganja, the second largest city of Azerbaijan located far beyond the conflict zone with ballistic Elbrus/SCUD missiles launched from the territory of Armenia on October 11 and October 17, 2020 led to particularly tragic consequences, including for the children. Night time attacks with missiles of such a devastating capacity and high precision on civilian populated quarter of Ganja resulted in the death of 6 children, while 5 others were seriously wounded. 3 children lost both of their parents and became orphan. This pre-planned and deliberate attack of Armenia on weekends aimed at inflicting as much as possible civilian casualties. As such, it constitutes a war crime, a crime against humanity and an act of state terror.

The above-mentioned are not sporadic cases, but represent yet another manifestation of Armenia's systematic policy to deny Azerbaijani children their basic human rights, most importantly the right to life and education. 63 children were killed in the result of genocide committed by Armenia in the town of Khojaly on February 26, 1992. In addition, 26 children became orphan, while 130 others lost one of their parents.

In the result of the war unleashed by Armenia in early 1990s against Azerbaijan, tens of thousands Azerbaijani children have been expelled from their homes due to the ethnic cleansing policy and faced serious challenges in getting education. More others residing in the vicinity of the line of contact have been deprived of their right to education in safe and secure environment. 1145 educational facilities, 855 kindergartens and 927 libraries have been destructed by armed forces of Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Armenia's violations of international humanitarian law and the rights of the child are not limited to Azerbaijani children. Information from various sources, including from independent media sources testify recruitment by Armenia of the children both in its own territory and in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan to take a direct part in armed hostilities. This blatant violation of Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child must be addressed in a most expeditious manner. There are also reports indicating that Armenia uses educational facilities for military purposes.

In this situation, when Armenia clearly disregards the norms and principles of international law, undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, grossly violates international human rights and humanitarian law it is more important than ever for entire international community to demonstrate firm and principled position and persuade Armenia to stop its aggression and put an end to its war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In light of the above-mentioned, I appeal to you with a request of raising your voice against Armenia's attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure and taking all necessary measures at your disposal in defence of highly important mandate entrusted to the UNICEF to urge Armenia to cease its aggression and fully comply with its obligations under international law, including the humanitarian law with respect to protecting the lives and rights of the children. Along with political and diplomatic measures, a strong targeted public statement would be highly instrumental in this regard.

I attach herewith photographic evidence of Armenia's above-mentioned violations and count on Your personal interference, and support and solidarity of the UNICEF on this matter of serious concern for the Government and the People of Azerbaijan.

*Encl.: as stated*

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**



Enclosure to the letter

**VIOLATIONS BY ARMENIA OF  
INTERNATIONAL  
HUMANITARIAN LAW  
AND  
THE CONVENTION ON THE  
RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

## CASUALTIES AMONG AZERBAIJANI CHILDREN AND DAMAGE INFLECTED UPON THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES



Photo 1 – 5:

*Children wounded as a result of the missile attacks on the city of Ganja on 11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of October, 2020*



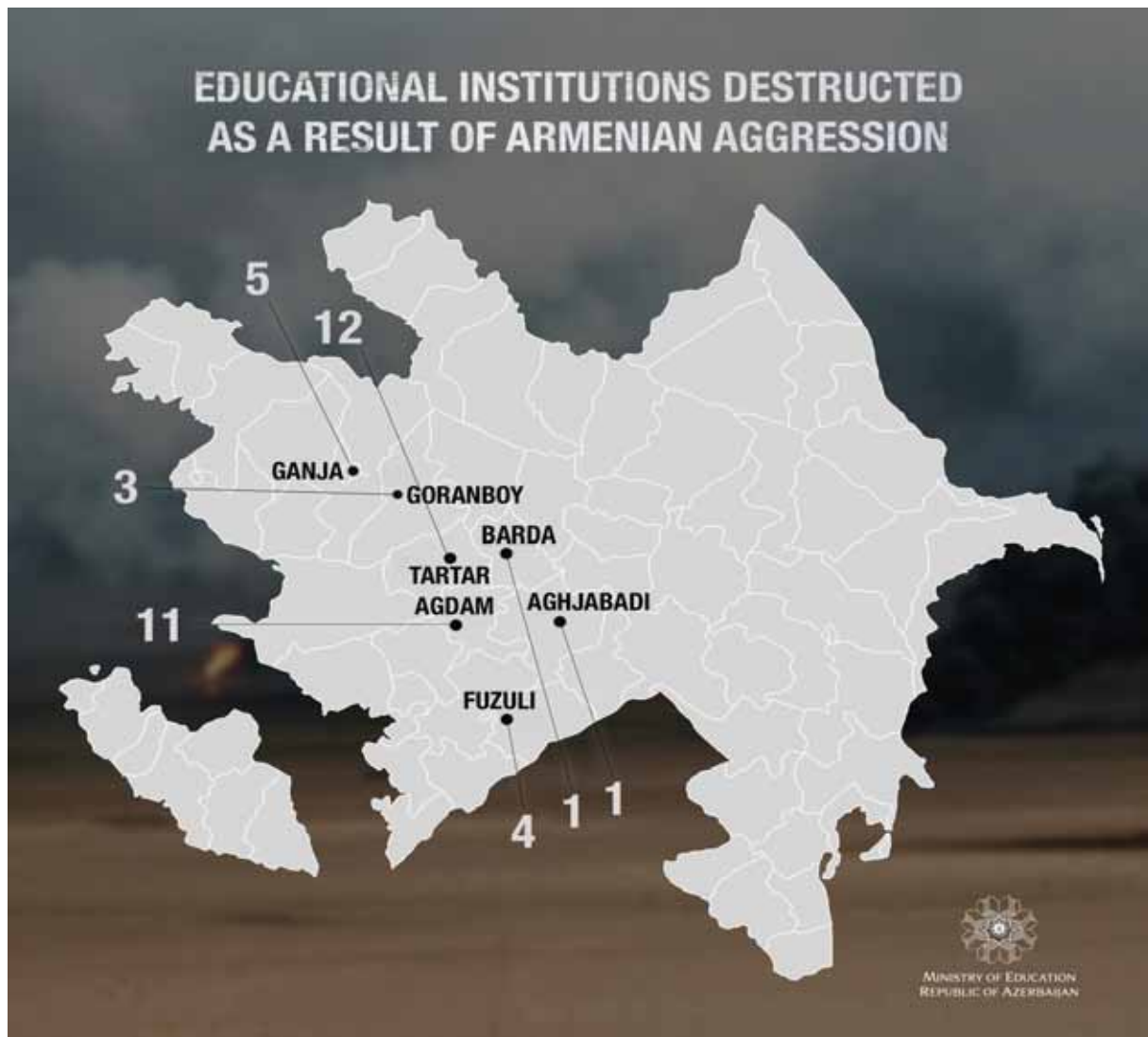
**Photo 6:**

*Timur Khaligov carries his 10-months-old daughter Narin, who was killed along with 5 relatives*



**Photo 7 & 8:**

*Madina Shahnazarli, 16-month-old babygirl was killed as a result of deliberate missile strike on Ganja by Armenia*



### Number of schools destroyed (per districts)

- 12 schools in Tartar;
- 11 schools in Agdam;
- 5 schools in Ganja;
- 4 schools in Fuzuli;
- 3 schools in Goranboy;
- 1 school in Aghjabadi;
- 1 school in Barda.



Photo 9 – 12:

*Secondary school no.29 in the city of Ganja hit by missile*





**Photo 13:**  
*Secondary school in Tartar named after Shikar Shikarov*



**Photo 14:**  
*Secondary school no.4 in the city of Ganja hit by missile*

## USE OF CHILDREN BY THE ARMED FORCES OF ARMENIA IN MILITARY HOSTILITIES



**Photo 1 & 2:** *Underage named Valeri is involved in combat duty by armed forces of Armenia*



**Photo 3:**  
*Children helping soldiers to clean their guns*



**Photo 4:**  
*Armenian children with gun pose together with Armenian military*



## Information of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**October 27, 2020**

The recent videos widely spread on social media demonstrate that Armenia employs children as soldiers in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

It is almost three decades that hundred of thousands of children in the Republic of Azerbaijan suffer from the ongoing aggression of Armenia and its long-lasting effects. But as we are witnessing today Armenia not only continues to violate the rights of Azerbaijani children but does not hesitate to violate the rights of Armenian children as well.

By using children in the military operations Armenia violates the protection guaranteed for children by the IV Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians and I Additional Protocol which provides that "children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault". By such actions, Armenia vigorously violates the child rights enshrined in the UN Child Rights Convention, its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, in particular Article 1 and Article 2.

While using children as combatants Armenia deprives the children of their fundamental rights, in particular the right to life and the right to protection, as children might become military targets as combatants. Moreover, Armenia which presents itself as one of the "advocates" of the Safe Schools Declaration does not hesitate to use school buildings for military purposes, which is another demonstration of its failure to respect the protection of future generations.

We firmly condemn the violation of the rights of children by Armenia in blatant ignorance of international conventions and its commitments under international humanitarian law and call the related international organizations to thoroughly investigate these illegal practices and take necessary measures to stop the breach of rights of children by Armenia.

## Press release of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**October 27, 2020**

On October 27, 2020, as a result of the Smerch MLRS missile attack by the armed forces of Armenia on the Barda district of Azerbaijan 4 civilians, including a child were killed and 13 civilians, including children and women, were seriously injured.

This is yet another war crime committed by Armenia in recent days in gross violation of the humanitarian ceasefire, agreed for the third time through the continued efforts of international mediators, and its commitments under the international humanitarian law. The next bloody crime committed by the armed forces of Armenia on the eve of the meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs in Geneva is a clear demonstration that the aggressor state Armenia is not interested in a political solution to the conflict and aims to undermine negotiations by all means.

The political-military leadership of Armenia bears full responsibility for this crime against humanity against the Azerbaijani peaceful population. We call the international community to take a firm position to bring the perpetrators to justice.

## Excerpts from the interview of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev to the Interfax Agency

**October 28, 2020**

- *Mr. President, you noted that Baku is interested in completing the military phase as quickly as possible. How long do you think it can last and is Baku ready to be content with seven districts around Nagorno-Karabakh?*

- I have repeatedly said in my addresses to the Azerbaijani people and in numerous interviews this month that we are ready to stop at any moment, even today. But for this to happen, the Armenian side must commit to withdrawing its troops from the rest of the occupied territories. Therefore, I cannot predict how long the military confrontation will last. It depends on the Armenian side. As I said, their constant attempts to recapture our lands have failed. I think this should already be enough for them to understand that they will not achieve anything by military means. Unfortunately, in the political domain they are demonstrating an obstructive approach, as I said, and have grossly violated the ceasefire three times. Based on this, of course, we will continue to plan on further action. As for the occupied territories, of course, the Azerbaijanis must return to all the occupied territories where they used to live, and this has always been my approach. Not only to the seven occupied districts outside Nagorno-Karabakh, outside the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region, but also to the territories, to the lands they had lived on for centuries. First of all, these are Shusha, Khankandi and other lands that have been inhabited by Azerbaijanis for centuries. I also said that our vision for a settlement lies in the coexistence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh. It so happened historically that the Armenian population has been living on these lands for 200 years. We all know the history of the resettlement of Armenians from Eastern Anatolia and Iran. But it so happened. They have lived there for 200 years. And we have no objection to the continued presence of the Armenian population. On the contrary, I have always said that thousands of citizens of Armenian origin live in Azerbaijan, that Armenians and Azerbaijanis live together in neighbouring countries and get along quite well. Why can't this be achieved in Nagorno-Karabakh? Our vision is this: Azerbaijanis should return to all the territories they lived in. The Armenian population should also live on this land. And in the environment of good neighbourliness, we will strive to heal the wounds of war.

- *So it means that Baku will not stop until Armenian servicemen withdraw from all the occupied territories.*

- We need the Armenian side, through its leadership, to undertake a commitment to withdraw troops from the occupied territories. We haven't heard that yet. As soon as this commitment is made by the Armenian leadership and as soon as it is confirmed and approved by OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, we are ready to stop military action immediately, provided that the Armenian side also stops it because all three violations of the ceasefire were committed by the Armenian side. Four civilians, including a seven-year-old girl, were killed as a result of a cluster munitions fired on Barda yesterday. This is not a conflict zone. So this is a flagrant violation of the ceasefire, which was agreed in Washington. Prior to that, the ceasefire agreed in Moscow was violated by the Armenian side the next day when they launched a ballistic missile from the territory of Armenia to Ganja. And as a result of this, 10 people died. As a result of the second ballistic missile attack on Ganja, even more people died. There are about 30 victims in a peaceful city. Therefore, it is not our fault that the ceasefire is not observed. Therefore, the Armenian side must undertake that they will withdraw from the occupied territories they are still holding under occupation: these include a part of Aghdam district, the entire Lachin district and most of Kalbajar district. And then we will be ready, of course, to move on to a political settlement. It will cover many aspects. In principle, we have accepted the basic principles, while the Armenian side has rejected them.

But the Armenian prime minister's aggressive statement yesterday suggests that they say one thing to the mediators and do something completely different.

*- Mr. President, you have said that Baku is mainly committed to the basic principles. The first point of these principles was the liberation of five districts around Nagorno-Karabakh. But at present, four out of five districts have already been liberated by Azerbaijan's Army. It turns out that, at a minimum, the fundamental principles are either not relevant or need some adjustment.*

- It will depend on the Armenian side's conduct again. As you know, negotiations between the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia are to be held in Geneva tomorrow. There we will see how committed the Armenian side is to the basic principles. After that, we will give our assessment of how relevant they are now or not, although I have repeatedly stated during this month that Azerbaijan accepts them in general, there are certain aspects that do not suit us, of course, but we accept them in general. As for the return of five districts at the first stage, of course, this is no longer relevant because the basic principles determined the sequence of territories to be returned – five districts at the first stage, and Kalbajar and Lachin districts at the second. Then comes the return of Azerbaijanis to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, in principle, the return of all refugees to the places of their original residence. We have almost completed the first stage. Therefore, if the Armenian side expresses its adherence to the basic principles, we will talk about an immediate transfer of Lachin, Kalbajar and a part of Aghdam district, that are still under occupation, to Azerbaijan. Thus, we will somewhat facilitate the work of mediators because one of the important issues will have already be implemented and we will not have to wait for a second stage. It must come right away. If we agree on a political settlement, then Armenian troops should withdraw from Kalbajar and Lachin districts and a part of Aghdam district immediately.

*- You have already touched upon tomorrow's meeting of foreign ministers and outlined the overall expectations of Baku. I would like to clarify if Baku still expects the Armenian side to show constructivism and the negotiations to be more substantive, not abstract and broad?*

- I think we are still hopeful. Although the aggressive conduct of the Armenian side and the fact that they are flagrantly violating international law, the Geneva Conventions, and committing war crimes does not suggest that they are going to address the substance of the settlement issue. Attacking peaceful cities with cluster munitions is a war crime. We have 69 civilians killed and more than 300 injured as a result of Armenian shelling. This is the face of Armenian fascism. At the same time, I think that the defeat we have inflicted on Armenia on the battlefield should nevertheless be a serious signal for them that they can no longer imitate things, deceive us, deceive the Minsk Group co-chairs and essentially evade substantive discussions. As for the process of negotiations, there was practically none for the past year, even more than a year. This was the first time this has happened since the 1994 truce. Because since then, the negotiations have been going on with varying degree of intensity and the parties have agreed on provisions of the basic principles. They did not fall from the sky. These were the principles proposed by the Minsk Group, its co-chairs, and agreed by the parties. Therefore, there was a process, albeit slow, and some progress was being made. But after the new government came to power in Armenia, they gave us and, as far as I know, the mediators, promises in the first year. But in the second year, they openly demonstrated their true intention that they would not give up a single centimetre of the land. Moreover, they threatened us with a new war for new territories. In fact, these were the words of their Minister of Defence who has been completely discredited as such both in the eyes of his own people and in the eyes of the international community. And after such a humiliating defeat, I am surprised he hasn't resigned yet.

- *What is your assessment of remarks by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who on the one hand uses belligerent rhetoric but on the other hand says that Armenia should prepare for painful compromises, then changes his tone again? What is behind this?*

- It is hard for me to comment on this. I would probably refrain from an assessment of what is happening to the Armenian prime minister. Probably, this military defeat influenced his mental state, otherwise how one can explain the series of inconsistent statements and actions that are absolutely irrational and harmful, primarily for himself as the country's leader and dangerous and harmful for his country?

Many people ask why the clashes happened now and not before. Even those who have are biased towards Azerbaijan and openly support Armenia would ask this question. Twenty-six years have passed since the 1994 truce. There were clashes, there were victims over those years, but not on such a scale. So what has happened? Nothing has changed in Azerbaijan.

I have been engaged in settlement negotiations for 17 years, and I have gone a long way towards agreeing on the basic principles together with the two previous Armenian presidents. That is why it is clear to impartial observers that it is not our fault. This has to do with inappropriate, irrational, and dangerous conduct of the Armenian prime minister. No former Armenian leader ever allowed insulting innuendos with respect to the Azerbaijani people. None of them allowed the head of so-called Nagorno-Karabakh to be inaugurated in Shusha. None of them prided themselves on the demonstrative violation of the Geneva Convention - showing the resettlement of the Lebanese Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha. None of them was going to move the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh parliament" from Khankandi to Shuha. And so on and so forth.

So these are the results of the ill-conceived and dangerous activity of Prime Minister Pashinyan. I wouldn't comment on his statements inside the country. But what he does concerning the settlement is very dangerous for Armenia itself. Today, Armenia can clearly see this. That is why I think that the Minsk Group co-chairs should clearly raise this issue before the Armenian foreign minister, who, as I understand, is in a very difficult situation. He has to answer for the inappropriate conduct of his leader, and in fact he deserves sympathy. He will have to get himself out of this situation and somehow explain series of inconsistent actions by his prime minister. On the one hand, he speaks about painful concessions; on the other hand, he says that there is no diplomatic solution. First, he says that he is ready for a compromise but then he says that he will defend Karabakh until the very end. On the one hand, he says that Karabakh is Armenia, but then he says that we should negotiate with Nagorno-Karabakh. This is an absolutely mutually exclusive palette of inadequacy. So I think that many of these issues will be clarified tomorrow.

- *In your latest address to the Azerbaijani people, you quite harshly criticized the mediators for essentially being inactive. Does this mean that Baku will insist on changing the Minsk Group format?*

- I have spoken many times about the performance of the OSCE Minsk Group over the past month. And what I said in the address to the Azerbaijani people is the absolute truth. Any format, no matter what it is called and who it involves, should acknowledge its ineffectiveness if it doesn't fulfill the set task. And the set task has not been fulfilled. Although I cannot deny that the Minsk Group made attempts to reach a settlement, because basic principles were elaborated with its assistance. They worked and they proposed options. There were some things we didn't agree with, there were some things that the Armenian side didn't agree with. So that was a process that had lasted until Pashinyan came to power in Armenia. But from the point of view of effectiveness and efficiency, the Minsk Group, of course, didn't live up to the expectations, I mean the co-chairs' performance. Should the co-chairs be other countries, this could have been explained by their insufficient international relevance, by their lack of authority to

implement even the UN Security Council resolutions that they had adopted themselves. But when the Minsk Group co-chairs are three permanent members of the UN Security Council, when three nuclear powers cannot exert pressure on Armenia, this, of course, raises a lot of questions.

As for the composition, I have already said that the Minsk Group was set up in 1992. I don't know how it was set up and what principles underlie the choice of its members. But as I said, if we formed a contact group today, its composition would, of course, have been completely different. It would include countries that have their positions in the region and that have potential and authority in the world. Of course, I think the countries that are current co-chairs could probably remain there. But this is not a question for me, because the mechanism and the procedure of forming the Minsk Group and its co-chairs is the prerogative of the OSCE.

I think that we should not cling to formalities in order to settle the conflict. The Minsk Group as such can continue working, but we should think about new cooperation mechanisms between the countries of the region in order to practically reach a political settlement. I think that Russian President Vladimir Putin probably meant the same when he spoke about this.

- *In this regard, some experts propose the 2+2 formula. How acceptable is it to Baku?*

- Two is Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the other two?

- *Turkey and Russia.*

- This would be acceptable to us, because Turkey and Russia are our neighbours and countries with which we have close mutual relations and countries with good potential for cooperation among them. It is enough to look at the history of the past few years. Turkey and Russia have reached a high level of mutual understanding on many issues, including the bilateral agenda and the international security agenda. We see that in Syria and in Libya, and in tackling issues of countering international terrorism, let alone energy projects, economic, investment projects. Even before this escalation, I said that we have always welcomed the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia. I believe that this is an important factor of regional security. Considering that Armenian separatism is the main threat for us, and not only for us but for the entire region, I believe that combining the efforts of Turkey and Russia would benefit the region and could accelerate the political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

- *Mr. President, you have repeatedly said that the mediators should impose sanctions against Armenia in order to secure a breakthrough in the settlement process. What it might look like?*

- I have been talking about it for a long time, but regrettably my calls remain unanswered. What sanctions could be applied? Sanctions that would make Armenia fulfill the UN Security Council resolutions and withdraw its troops from the occupied territories. For example, we could have considered the sanctions that were imposed on Iraq after its occupation of Kuwait. Similar things took place from the point of view of international law. The internationally recognized territory of Kuwait was occupied by Iraq, war crimes were committed, ethnic cleansing occurred, and only the timely reaction of the international community helped stop this occupation. And that happened within a short period of time. Next, economic sanctions, an arms embargo were imposed on Iraq. Iraq became a no-fly zone. War criminals, who committed crimes against humanity, were brought to justice and sentenced.

All these sanctions should be applied to Armenia. Even if one of those sanctions had been imposed, I am sure the conflict would have been resolved long ago. There has simply been no political will and desire to apply these sanctions. And more likely the position that prevailed was that - let's leave everything as it is as long as there is no escalation.

- *Do you mean frozen?*

- Frozen, of course. Although everyone understood that this cannot last forever. Everyone understood that 10 years ago. The presidents of Russia, the US and France made statements, and said clearly many times that the status-quo was unacceptable. Well, fine. We welcomed this, and I remember this was praised in our country, I commented on this. But what happened next? Then they began to depart from this thesis gradually, stopped voicing it and invented a new thesis that the status-quo is unstable. And we can clearly understand that these are completely different things. So the co-chair countries moved away even from a political attempt to exert pressure on Armenia. And it was common knowledge that the status-quo was unstable. And recent events proved this. This is why, let me repeat that again, it is not too late to apply sanctions in order to end the conflict as soon as possible. I think that co-chair countries should seriously think about what sanctions could be imposed on the aggressor in order to make them vacate the occupied lands.

- *Do you think that the co-chairs managed to remain entirely neutral over the month of the military phase?*

- Every country, including Azerbaijan, can have its own foreign political priorities. We have close relations with some countries and less closer with others. Our relations with some countries are based on historical factors and with others on pragmatic factors. That is why we have always treated with understanding the fact that there are very well structured and active Armenian communities in the co-chair countries, in the US, in France, and in Russia. Even when we analyze this situation, it is very hard to tell where they have greater influence on decision-making. That is why we have always taken and are taking this factor into account.

If there were some deviations at the first stage of hostilities that made us doubt their neutrality, I think now everything is fine-tuned. My contacts with the leaders of the co-chair countries, as well as, I am sure, international support that Azerbaijan got, resulted in the fact that we can see this neutrality now. Once again, what some people have on their mind is not our business, but, of course, the mediators must adhere to international law and neutrality, otherwise they will just forfeit the right to be mediators. A mediator must be impartial, it must leave emotions at home or leave them for the bilateral format, and as part of the settlement it must take into account the mandate from the OSCE and willingness to settle the conflict in line with international law rather than in line with the wishes of Azerbaijan or Armenia.

- *You have said recently said that there will be no referendum in Nagorno-Karabakh. This is the new reality. Does this mean that Azerbaijan has changed its position, made it tougher?*

- I have been talking about this for 17 years, and the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs know my position. I don't remember how many co-chairs have changed over these years, how many diplomats have been co-chairmen, but all of them can confirm that I have always said that there would never be a referendum on the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. Moreover, if we look at the basic principles, there is no such word as 'referendum' there. There is a certain wording related to the expression of will, to self-determination there.

We have always said that self-determination is an important principle of international law, but it cannot violate the territorial integrity of a country. Secondly, a country's territorial integrity cannot be changed without the consent of this country. And I naturally adhere to this position today: we will not let a second Armenian state be set up on Azerbaijan's territories. If someone is willing to create a second Armenian state, let them give a part of their territory and let them create it there.

*- Russia has proposed deploying military observers in the conflict zone. Prime Minister Pashinyan in general agreed to deploying peacekeepers to the conflict zone and didn't rule out that these could be Russian peacekeepers. So is it military observers or peacekeepers? What is the position of Baku?*

- This issue is reflected in the basic principles, but we have never seriously discussed it because we simply didn't get to it. It was planned to dispatch peacekeepers to the region at the final stage of the settlement, when the consequences of the occupation are eliminated, when refugees return to Nagorno-Karabakh, then, yes, in order to ensure that Azerbaijani and Armenian population can live side by side, disengagement forces will be needed at the first stage. But the basic principles don't state for how long they should be deployed and what countries they should consist of - simply because we didn't reach it. First of all, all main provisions of the agreement must be agreed on. As for the desire of the Armenian prime minister to see peacekeepers in the conflict zone, then firstly, this is none of his business, because when we speak about the conflict zone, we should understand that this is Azerbaijan's territory. If we speak about peacekeepers at the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan, this is another issue. But as far as I understand, it is the Azerbaijani territory that is in question now, that is why we should have, of course, the final say. And since this topic wasn't broadly discussed, I think it is premature to speak about it. But for my part I would like to note that when we speak about it, we should firstly understand what mandate possible observers would have and where they would be deployed. One should understand that there is no line of contact, so where will their outposts be? Armenia breaches international law and ceasefire, shelling our cities. Just recently, "Euronews" aired footage that clearly showed a flying missile. And it was flying to our cities rather than military positions. So where they will be, what mandate, composition, numbers, arms, and functions will they have, and who will ensure their security? These questions require very thorough evaluation, and only then will we be able to say whether we agree to it or not. That is why it is so far premature.

*- In general, do military officials of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia discuss any mechanisms of ceasefire monitoring?*

- No, there are no such discussions now.

*- Are you ready to go to Moscow for negotiations on Karabakh with the Armenian prime minister? And on what conditions?*

- I haven't received such an invitation. I have repeatedly taken part in trilateral meetings between the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, but there have been no such meetings since Pashinyan came to power in Armenia. These meetings were with the previous presidents of Armenia, and I have never avoided such meetings. I considered them to be very positive, because Russia as a co-chair of the Minsk Group plays a special role in the settlement, and historically Russia has always maintained close ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russia is very actively cooperating politically and economically with Azerbaijan and Armenia these days, it is our neighbour. Therefore, it is natural that most of these meetings have been held in Russia, but there have been no such meetings with Pashinyan. I don't know how efficient they are going to be now with regard to inadequacy of the Armenian leadership. But if such a proposal is made, we have always viewed them positively and will continue to do so.

- *Does this mean that you are ready to go if there is such an invitation?*

- Yes, and as you have said - without any preconditions. This is evident from the fact that our foreign ministers will be meeting in Geneva tomorrow also without any preconditions. Moreover, I would like to say that, when the conflict just erupted recently, our foreign minister had plans to visit Geneva to meet with the co-chairs, and he did go there. And the Armenian foreign minister, who had planned to travel there a week before, in early October, refused to go. And when a proposal from Moscow came on a meeting between the foreign ministers to coordinate a humanitarian ceasefire, our foreign minister flew there from Geneva. In other words, we are not setting any terms, but again, I really doubt that the current Armenian authorities are capable of constructively working toward a settlement.

- *Is there a risk that the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict will escalate into a regional confrontation involving big powers?*

- Frankly speaking, I cannot fully rule this out, but I must say that for our part we will take no actions that could lead to this, there will be no provocations that would make this conflict international. We don't need this, and I have said many times over the past month that we are against this, and I called on countries to show restraint and not to interfere. I am glad this is happening this way. Although Armenia's constant attempts to internationalize this conflict and constant requests of the Armenian leadership for Russia to almost send its troops to fight on Armenia's side are exactly what I was talking about - to pull somebody's chestnuts out of the fire. That is why I am sure that regional countries and these are the countries that Azerbaijan enjoys close historical, cultural, political and trustworthy relations with - Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Georgia - will naturally refrain from any actions that would play into the aggressor's hands.

- *You have repeatedly said that the military phase of the conflict will end sooner or later. If Karabakh and seven districts are returned, how could this affect the pace of Azerbaijan's economic development?*

- It is hard to say. You know, there are different assessments. Of course, the return of large territories under our control is a big potential for growth and development, primarily in agriculture and tourism spheres. The Karabakh region is one of the most beautiful and fertile regions of our country. It is rich in natural resources - gold, zinc, lead. By the way, Armenia illegally produces gold in Kalbajar jointly with some foreign companies. But we, of course, will hold all of them to account through relevant legal procedures. That is why prospects of this region will be crucial for Azerbaijan's sustainable development and for ensuring food security, primarily. But one should understand that this will entail enormous financial expenditures at the initial stage.

- *Restoration...*

- Yes, of course. The footage that we demonstrate show that there is no house left intact there. When we liberated Fuzuli, we were unable to find a single building intact - just imagine - in the entire city. And tens of thousands people lived there. No building. I was called, and I said raise the flag on a flagpole. Do you understand? This is what they did. And look at the ruins of Aghdam and Jabrayil district. Everything is in ruins. It looked as if barbarians were there, not people. They took everything away, roofs, windows, toilets, sinks. They are just thieves. That is why we will face enormous expenditures - infrastructure, roads, communications, housing, administrative buildings. Let me put it this way, at the first stage from the point of view of the gross domestic product this will probably have a positive impact on the construction industry, employment, and everything related to the production of construction materials. But from the point of view of expenditures, these will run to many billions.



We will calculate the damage. I have already ordered, given instructions to set up temporary command offices in liberated territories. I issued this order just a few days ago. We will take stock of everything that is left there; we will assess the damage inflicted there. Naturally, later, at the stage when our people will return there, we will employ relevant legal procedures and hold the aggressor accountable.

So I think in the long run, I think, in five or ten years this will add a good impetus to the non-oil industries, while this will be very costly in the short run. But there are no material dimensions that would stop us from restoring Karabakh and make it one of the most beautiful and comfortable place for living on earth.

*- And my last question. What is your vision of the geopolitical development of the situation and alignment of forces in the region after the Karabakh conflict is settled?*

- I believe the situation will certainly be different from what it used to be before the conflict. We have changed the geopolitical order in the region in many respects. It has already been changed, and a lot of stereotypes have become outdated - for instance, such a stereotype as confrontation between Russia and NATO. Now look: Russia and Turkey, a NATO member, have far more sincere and trustworthy relations than Turkey, a NATO member, has with some other country. It didn't use to be this way. This is a new reality. That is why this very structured stereotypic geopolitical thinking is being consigned to history. I think this is a positive factor. So we have to proceed from the reality. And politicians shape the reality by their actions. I think our region today sees a very positive format of cooperation between leading policy-makers, who determine the region's agenda and are focused on cooperation. After all, we can talk about active cooperation between Turkey, Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan in both trilateral and bilateral formats these days. I think one day we will start working in a quadrilateral format as well. This would be natural from the historical, economic, transport and geopolitical standpoints, and what is most important, from the standpoint of strengthening security in this region.

That is why Armenia should not remain foreign matter on the body of the Caucasus. It was the last to come here, and the Armenian state was created artificially on the lands that it never owned. I have said many times that the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic gave Yerevan to Armenia. This is a historical fact. On 29 May 1918, a day after the foundation of the republic was announced, Yerevan was given to Armenia. When this issue was being discussed, members of the legislative body from Yerevan were against it, but their opinion was ignored. So this is how Yerevan was given away, as simply as that. But, as they say, what is done is done.

Armenia shouldn't be a foreign body. It must end the occupation and normalize relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey. This would only benefit them, believe me, this would only benefit them. All communications would be opened, and they would become part of energy and transport integration projects, they would become part of the common security system. After all, look, Turkey is buying S-400 systems from Russia. This is an absolutely new security system. This is not just the purchase of an air defence system, but this is a step toward a new security system and mutual confidence. This can't be accomplished without mutual confidence. We bought S-300 from Russia a long time ago, this is also a factor of mutual trust, you see. Therefore, this arrangement in the region benefits all. Armenia should come to understand that it is being marginalized, and nobody will fight for it. And what's next? If it continues confrontation with us, if it keeps making territorial claims against Turkey, well, it should understand, how can it oppose us? But we don't want this opposition. We want peace, despite all the pain and tragedies that they have inflicted on our people. Therefore, I believe that geopolitical realities should be developing positively. At least as far as we are concerned, we will be doing all we can to make this happen.

*- Thank you for your detailed answers.*

- Thank you

## Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**October 29, 2020**

On 28 October 2020, the armed forces of Armenia hit the city of Barda of Azerbaijan with a "Smerch" multiple rocket launcher system causing serious civilian casualties. As a result of the treacherous missile attack on the city of Barda 21 civilians, including children were killed and more than 70 people seriously injured.

Targeting yet another time the residential area in the city situated far away from the conflict zone, which has no signs of military targets exposes once again the terrorist nature of Armenia.

The deliberate killing of a peaceful population in the city of Barda by the armed forces of Armenia constitutes an act of genocide, a war crime, and a crime against humanity.

It is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law by Armenia and the leadership of Armenia, including the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the country bear full responsibility for this crime.

By attacking the Azerbaijani residential areas and civilians during the formally declared humanitarian ceasefire and on the eve of the Geneva meeting of the Foreign Ministers of both states with the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, Armenia obviously aims to undermine the negotiations, increase the tensions and involve the third states to the conflict.

Remaining silent to the barbaric acts of Armenia and impunity for these crimes against the Azerbaijani peaceful population equals inciting perpetrators for further atrocities. The international community should take necessary steps to stop Armenia from violating international law, purposefully killing the civilians, and demand to withdraw its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan will do its utmost that those responsible for these inhuman acts do not escape justice and are held accountable.

## Excerpts from the remarks by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev made at the signing of the Trilateral Statement of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation

November 10, 2020



I am delighted that an end is being put to the longstanding conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan today, an end is being put to the occupation of Azerbaijan's lands through achieving agreement on essential positions that has taken more than one hour and, in general, more than one day. We have reached a settlement that I believe meets the interests of the peoples of Azerbaijan, Armenia and countries of the region. I must say that the military-political settlement of the conflict we are now witnessing will, I am sure, lead to long-term peace and accord in our region and put an end to confrontation and bloodshed.

The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of the longest-running conflicts in our region, in Eurasia, and the fact that it is coming to an end today is a historic event. It is a historic event first of all for the people of Azerbaijan, which are finally getting rid of the many years of occupation. It is also a triumph of the norms and principles of international law, the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions, which, unfortunately, remained on paper for a long time.

Vladimir Vladimirovich, I would like to express my gratitude to you for your active participation in the settlement process in previous years, and especially during the hot phase of the conflict. And the fact that the three leaders of the countries are signing this document today speaks volumes of the Russian Federation's special role in the settlement of this conflict. And I am sure that the Russian Federation's role in further activities in the region, including eliminating the consequences of the conflict and the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, will also be significant.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the President of the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, today for his active participation in the political settlement of the conflict. One of the provisions of today's statement is the joint peacekeeping mission of Russia and Turkey. Thus, we are creating an entirely new format of interaction in the region not only within the framework of the conflict settlement but also for future development. Because one of the provisions also stipulates the unblocking of all transport communications, which will benefit all countries of the region. Therefore, I sign this document today with a feeling of joy and a sense of pride, and I would like to congratulate the Azerbaijani people on this historic event. Thank you.

## EXCERPT FROM THE REPORT ON THE USE OF FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS BY THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA IN ITS RECENT AGGRESSION AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN\*

In blatant violation of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, Armenia has been occupying one fifth of the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan for almost 30 years. As a result of Armenia's aggression, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were forcefully expelled from their homes and became internally displaced persons.

Over the years, Armenia has systematically and deliberately pursued the goal of cementing the occupation and securing the annexation of the seized Azerbaijani territories. Being against the political settlement, which rejects the status-quo based on the unlawful use of force, Armenia has undertaken a chain of provocative actions to undermine the peace process. The illegal transfer of settlers and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from Iraq, Lebanon and Syria into the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is among such actions.

The Government of Armenia has provided accommodation, training and logistical maintenance of FTFs in the occupied territories to prepare them for terrorist and combat operations against Azerbaijan. Training camps had been established by Armenia under the instruction of PKK and ASALA terrorist organizations. The transfer of FTFs intensified immediately after Armenia had perpetrated another act of aggression on 27 September 2020.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly brought to the attention of the world community the threats and challenges emanating from Armenia's unlawful actions. In its communications, Azerbaijan has called on all States to condemn Armenia for its illegal settlement policy in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, strengthen border control measures for preventing the transfer of FTFs into the territories of Azerbaijan, suppress the financing of terrorism carried out under the cover of charity activities by Armenian diaspora organizations and prevent the abuse of civil aviation for transporting FTFs and armament to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

In an attempt to divert the attention of the international community from its own crimes and justify heavy losses inflicted on its armed forces on the battlefield, Armenia brazenly accused Azerbaijan of the use of FTFs and waged a scaled campaign of disseminating fake news to that end. However, professional analysis of various video and photo materials shared to substantiate Armenia's claims clearly testifies to their fabricated content and nature. Thus, as one author has noted, "[i]t is surprising that such obvious falsifications somehow get on to the pages of leading foreign publications. Yerevan has so far been unable to provide any evidence of the presence of so-called mercenaries in Karabakh fighting for Azerbaijan".<sup>1</sup>

*\*Note: The report was circulated as a document of the UN General Assembly and Security Council under the reference number A/75/625-S/2020/1161. For the full text of the report, please, visit <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/75/625>*

<sup>1</sup> Philippe Jeune, "War in Karabakh: How fake news appears on Western media", Eureporter (10 November 2020), <https://www.eureporter.co/general/2020/11/10/war-in-karabakh-how-fake-news-appears-on-western-media/>

## VIOLATIONS BY ARMENIA OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW \*



\* Excerpts from the information distributed by the Azerbaijani side in the course of the 44-Day War. For full version, please, visit <https://www.mfa.gov.az/files/Violations-by-Armenia-of-International-Human-Rights-Law-and-International-Humanitarian-Law.pdf>

## INTRODUCTION

On September 27, 2020 the armed forces of Armenia, blatantly violating the ceasefire regime have launched yet another act of aggression against Azerbaijan, by intensively attacking the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan along the frontline, as well as by deliberately subjecting to artillery shelling residential areas of Tartar, Aghdam, Fuzuli and Jabrayil districts. On the following days, densely populated residential areas – Shamkir, Beylagan, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Goranboy, Tartar, Barda, Aghjabadi and the city of Ganja were subjected to heavy bombardment, including with mid-range missiles.

As a result, there have been casualties among civilians and military servicemen of Azerbaijan. Extensive damage has been inflicted on many houses and other civilian infrastructure.

The new act of aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan is yet another blatant violation of fundamental norms and principles of international law, IHL, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its Additional Protocols, as well as the United Nations Security Council resolutions 822, 853, 874, 884 of 1993 demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

According to preliminary estimation, as of October 30, totally 91 civilians, including children, women and elderly have been killed, more than 400 civilians have been wounded as a consequence of heavy artillery shelling. As of October 29, 2406 private houses, 92 apartment buildings and 423 civilian facilities were damaged and became unserviceable as a result of armed attack.

Vehicles belonging to civilians became unserviceable, and numerous small and large horned animals and haystacks were destroyed as well. Extensive damage was inflicted upon water, energy and other civilian infrastructure.

The armed forces of Armenia do not even spare ambulances and medical facilities in a blatant violation of IHL, in particular Article 35 of the First Geneva Convention of 1949.

Also, a medical worker was seriously injured as a result of the shooting by the armed forces of Armenia of a sanitary medical vehicle, clearly marked with a white flag, collecting the bodies of Armenian soldiers in the area of Sugovshan.

Every time when the humanitarian ceasefire was agreed between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the armed forces of Armenia violated it by subjecting residential areas and civilian infrastructure in Azerbaijan, including the city of Ganja, Barda, Mingachevir and Gabala to bombardment by different types of missiles like Scud, Smerch, Tocka-U and etc, launched both from its own territory and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The latest humanitarian ceasefire of October 26 has already been repeatedly violated by the armed forces of Armenia.

Below are some of those cases recorded for the last two weeks:

- Ganja – the 2nd biggest city, in which more than 331 000 people reside and which is located far from the frontline, was subjected to “SCUD/Elbrus” ballistic missile attack launched from the territory of Armenia on October 17, 2020, around 02:00. This attack on a densely populated Ganja city has taken place for the third time in a row since October 4, 2020 (See Section 3).

- Barda – a city located approximately 100 km from the border with Armenia and 30 km away from the Contact Line, became a subject of attack by armed forces of Armenia. The rockets with banned cluster munitions were launched from the Smerch MLRS at densely populated areas of the Barda city, including its business centre and surroundings. The use of 9N235 cluster munitions from 9M55 Smerch rockets was confirmed by Amnesty International.<sup>1</sup> According to the preliminary reports, this terrorist attack by Armenia led to death of 21 civilians and 70 others were wounded. Civil infrastructure facilities and vehicles were extensively damaged. A day before, on October 27, Barda district has already came under the 300 mm “Smerch” cluster munition rocket attack by the armed forces of Armenia. As a result five civilians died, including a toddler and thirteen civilians were injured.
- Mingachevir – the 4th biggest city in Azerbaijan, in which 106 000 people reside, hosts the Mingechevir Water Hydropower Complex and is located far from the frontline was hit with missiles on 17 October 2020 around 01:00.
- Tartar city has been under the heavy artillery shelling since September 27. Over the last two weeks, the armed forces of Armenia have intentionally shelled private houses, civilian infrastructure, including schools and even a funeral ceremony. On October 26, Tartar city and the villages of the Tartar district became a subject of artillery attacks, including by the use of 300 mm “Smerch” MLRS again. More detailed information on civilian casualties is below.
- Ordubad district was hit with the missile by the armed forces of Armenia from the territory of the occupied Gubadli region on October 15 at 10:44.
- Aghdam district - as a result of artillery shelling of the residential areas of the district four civilians, including one journalist were injured on October 18. Artillery shelling of the villages of the Aghdam district continued on October 26.
- Gabala, Kurdamir and Siyazan districts located far away from the frontline became a subject of missile attacks launched from the Gafan and Jermukh regions of Armenia on October 22. The attack on these residential areas resulted in injury of a resident of Gabala and severe damage to five houses.
- Tovuz, Dashkasan and Aghjabadi districts were also shelled by the armed forces of Armenia on October 26.
- Gadabay, Tovuz and Dashkasan districts were again fired upon by the armed forces of Armenia on October 28.

In order to repel military aggression by Armenia and to ensure the security of civilians and densely populated residential areas inside the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan have launched counter-offensive measures. Azerbaijan acts on its sovereign soil exercising its right of self-defence and takes adequate and proportionate measures in full compliance with IHL to thwart the imminent threat to its civilian population and ensure their security.

The political and military leadership of the Republic of Azerbaijan has declared on numerous occasions since the start of the counter-offensive operations that only military objects and installations will be targeted and civilians residing in the occupied territories as well as civilian infrastructure therein will not

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/10/armenia-azerbaijan-first-confirmed-use-of-cluster-munitions-by-armenia-cruel-and-reckless/>



be targeted. On October 04, the Ministry of Defence issued an official appeal to those civilians calling them to stay away from the conflict zone, especially from firing points, military facilities and military infrastructure of the armed forces of Armenia. The Ministry further stated that appropriate conditions will be created for their evacuation from the conflict zone and all their rights will be protected.<sup>2</sup> On October 24, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan renewed this call and expressed the readiness to take all the necessary measures to ensure the security, food, medical care and other needs of the civilian population who will cross to the Azerbaijani side. The Ministry of Defence also appealed to the servicemen of the armed forces of Armenia to lay down their arms and surrender. As it was underlined in the call of the Ministry of Defence, all the rights of prisoners of war and civilians will be protected in accordance with International Humanitarian Law, and necessary conditions, through international organizations, will be created for persons wishing to move to third countries.<sup>3</sup>

## SECTION 1. VIOLATIONS AGAINST CIVILIANS

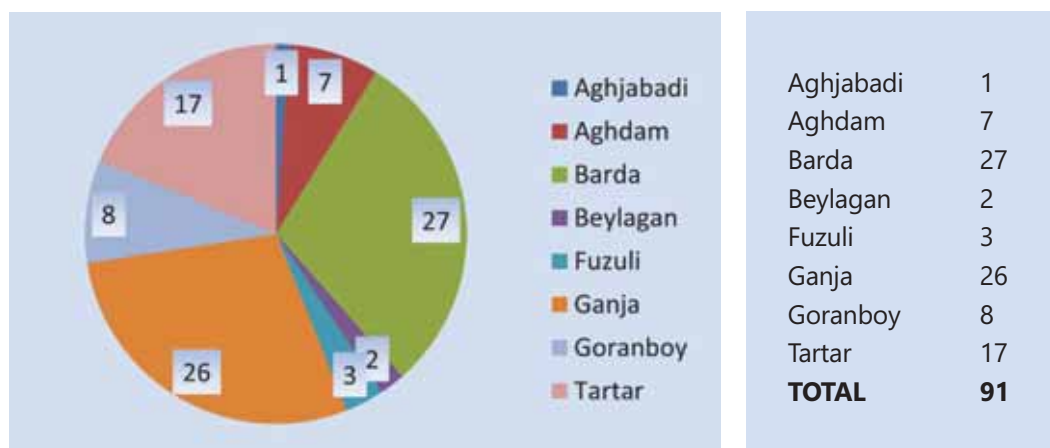
### 1.1 Deaths among the Civilian Population

The armed forces of Armenia with the use of artillery, rockets and missiles shelled Shamkir, Beylagan, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Goranboy, Tartar, Barda, Aghjabadi, Khizi, Tovuz, Yevlakh, Gabala, Kurdemir and Ordubad districts and the cities of Ganja and Minghachevir.

It should be mentioned that Vagharshak Harutyunyan, the chief advisor of the Prime Minister of Armenia in his interview to "Vesti" program on Russia TV channel on October 6, 2020 confessed that strikes at peaceful settlements are of deliberate nature in order to cause panic.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of deliberate targeting of densely populated residential areas 91 civilians, including 10 children and 27 females were killed (see Annex 1).

The number of deaths among civilians in regions of Azerbaijan is as follows:



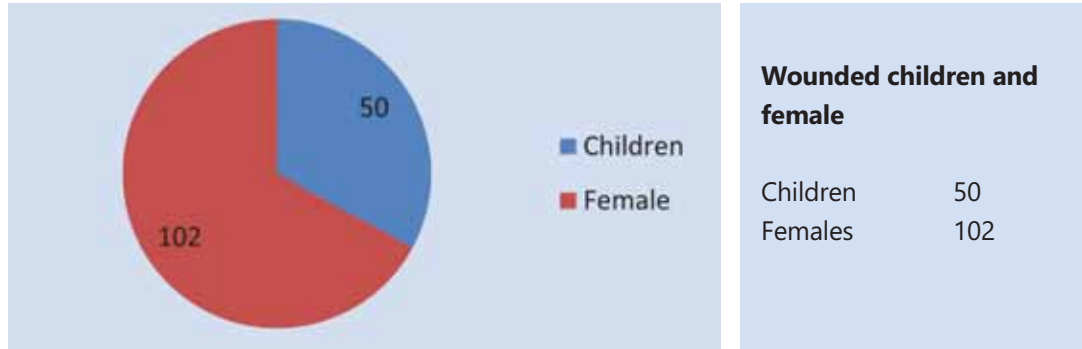
<sup>2</sup> <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/the-military-command-of-azerbaijan-addressed-the-peaceful-population-living-in-the-occupied-territories-32628.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/the-civilian-population-living-in-occupied-territories-is-advised-to-stay-away-from-military-facilities-33280.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/520382-washington-can-initiate-peace-in-the-south-caucasus;>  
<https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/pashinyans-advisor-confirms-armenias-deliberate-attacks-on-azerbaijani-civilian-settlements-2020-10-9-0/>

## 1.2 Civilian Injuries

According to preliminary estimation, totally 404 civilians were seriously wounded. 50 of them are children and 102 females.



Below are some cases on wounded civilians:

On October 27, as a result of the 300 "Smerch" rocket attack with banned cluster munitions by the armed forces of Armenia on the Garayusifly village of the Barda district 5 civilians were killed, 13 others wounded, including minors - Ismayilova Aysu (2005), Alizada Elvin (2013), Hajiyeva Ayisha (2009), Iskandarly Tahira (2017) and Karimli Shukur (2005).

On October 22, Amirbeyov Murad (born in 2003), a resident of Hajally village of the Gabala district, received various injuries as a result of rockets launched by the armed forces of Armenia. Five houses in the village were severely damaged.

On October 19, the Tartar district came under intensive rocket artillery fire of the armed forces of Armenia. A resident of Alasgarli village - Salimov Niyaz (1962), was hospitalized with various injuries as a result of a shell hitting the yard of his house.

On the same day, as a result of a shell falling on Banovshalar settlement of the Aghdam district - Guliyeva Shamama (1955), and Guliyeva Maya (1976) were hospitalized with various injuries. Mahiyaddinli Chichek, a resident of Pashabeyli village, was also hospitalized with various injuries as a result of artillery shelling.

On October 17, due to the intensive rocket and heavy artillery shelling in direction of Aghjabadi district by the armed forces of Armenia, Hajiyev Rauf (1991), a resident of the village of Arazbar, has received various injuries as a result of an artillery shell falling on the yard of his house, and the house itself was severely damaged.

On October 15, early in the morning the armed forces of Armenia subjected Aghdam district to intensive rocket and artillery fire from various directions. Valiyev Shahsuvar (1969) and Musayev Roman (1979) have been injured as a result of shelling that hit their houses in Birinji Baharly settlement in Aghdam.

On October 14, a shell falling on the yard of a rural secondary school in the territory of Tartar district resulted in hospitalization with various wounds of Zeynalov Ramiz (1971), representative of Tartar District Authority for Duyarli village, Ahmadov Kamran (1966), representative of Asgarli village and the following villagers: Aliyev Matlab (1965), Ahmadov Khayyam (1987), Ibrahimov Ilgar (1965), Aghazade Firdovsi (1996) and Suleymanov Agha (1960).

On the same day, Gambarov Namig (1983), an employee of the Azerbaijan Television and Radio Broadcasting CJSC (AZTV) was hospitalized with various injuries as a result of the attack on journalists' vehicle by the armed forces of Armenia. On October 19, Hasanov Anar (1982), an AZTV reporter got wounds and was hospitalized with various injuries as a result of a fire by armed forces of Armenia.

## SECTION 2. TARGETING CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

### 2.1 Targeting Public Facilities and Private Property

As of October 29, 2406 private houses, 92 apartment buildings and 423 objects of civilian infrastructure have been damaged and have become unserviceable as a result of Armenia's armed attacks since September 27, 2020.



*Residential building hit by indiscriminate shelling in the Tartar district*



*Private properties in Aghdam*



*Tartar city cemetery after Armenia's missile attack*



*Private property after the attack on Barda on October 27*



*Damaged elementary school in the Ganja city*



*Scene evidence from the ruins in the Ganja city (17-October-2020)*



*Interior of the Imamzade mosque damaged as a result of the attack on the Ganja city*



*Private houses of residents of Ganja after missile attacks (17-October-2020)*



*Damaged secondary school No. 1 in Tartar*

***PARTICULAR CONCERN IS MEDICAL AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ARE BEING DELIBERATE TARGETS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF ARMENIA.***

Local ambulance was targeted by artillery fire in the Tartar district, in a blatant violation of Article 35 of the First Geneva Convention of 1949. The driver was seriously wounded





## 2.2 Targeting Civilian Infrastructure

Vital civilian infrastructures, such as electricity, gas, water, communication stations have also been targeted. The armed forces of Armenia targeted the Oghuz-Gabala-Baku water pipeline, which supplies drinking water to the Absheron Peninsula and is of special strategic importance for Azerbaijan. Air Defence Forces of Azerbaijan neutralized the missile and its parts consequently fell in the 250 meters perimeter from the pipeline.



*Barda streets after the missile attacks on*

10 kV Telestudio overhead line from 35/10 kV Khangarvand substation in Goranboy, and the 35 kV Gulustan and 10 kV Azizbeyov, 2<sup>nd</sup> Subartesian overhead lines from 110/30/10 kV Naftalan substation were repeatedly fired and shelled upon in Goranboy. The 0.4 kV distribution network in Tapgaragoyunlu is badly damaged. Repair and restoration work has not yet been possible.

10 kV AzGes №3, Sarijali №11 overhead lines from 110/35/10 kV Tartar substation and 10kV Borsunlu №3 from 35 kV Demirchiler substation were fired upon.

35 kV Horadiz-Boyuk Bahmanli overhead line, as well as 10 kV Shukurbayli, Gazaxlar, Babi and Alkhanli overhead lines from the 35/10 kV Horadiz and Mahmudlu substation was fired upon in different places and then restored in Fuzuli. In Alkhanli and Shukurbayli villages, the 0.4 kV distribution network is damaged and out of service.

110 kV Tazakand-1, Tazakand-2, Khindiristan-1 and Khindiristan-2 overhead lines were fired upon in Agdam. These lines have also been restored. In Aghjabadi, 10 kV Minaxhorlu from 110/35/10 kV Karabakh substation and 10 kV PMK-4 overhead line from 35/10 kV Qiyamadinli substation were also fired upon.

According to the latest data, the gas supply of Tapgaragoyunlu village of Goranboy remains to be limited. At present, natural gas is being supplied at about 50% of Fuzuli district. The gas supply for 53 residential settlements has been suspended, except Tartar city and 51 villages, 25 villages of Aghjabadi, a village and 5 settlements of Agdam.



*Electricity and energy infrastructure damaged and settlements were cut from electricity*

### SECTION 3. VIOLATIONS DURING THE HUMANITARIAN CEASEFIRE

Despite the humanitarian ceasefire agreed a few times during the month of October, armed forces of Armenia continued to target civilian property and other civilian infrastructure in densely populated residential areas. Below are some of those cases:

After October 11 (the day of heinous attack on Ganja) most of the casualties within one single day among civilians have been recorded following the attacks on Ganja on October 17, 2020, and on Barda on October 27-28.

On October 17, the Javadkhan area in the central part of Ganja was subjected to "SCUD/Elbrus" ballistic missile attack launched from the territory of Armenia. Serious damages have been inflicted upon civilians and infrastructure. Only in Ganja 25 civilians were killed and around 100 civilians were wounded since the humanitarian ceasefire was first agreed on October 10, 2020.

In view of systematic attacks on the city of Ganja, the following statement of Vagram Pogosian (so called "spokesperson" of the illegal puppet regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan) made on October 5, 2020, should be recalled: "A few more days and I'm afraid that even archaeologists will not be able to find the place of Ganja. Get sober, before it is too late."<sup>5</sup>

On October 27, as a result of the 300 "Smerch" rocket attack with banned cluster munitions by the armed forces of Armenia on the Garayusifly village of the Barda district, according to the preliminary estimation, five civilians died, including a toddler and thirteen civilians were injured. On October 28, around 1pm Armenia launched again 300mm "Smerch" rockets with banned cluster munitions at densely populated areas of the city of Barda, including its business centre and surroundings. According to the preliminary reports, this act of terror by Armenia resulted in death of 21 civilians and injuries of 70 civilians. Civil infrastructure facilities and vehicles were extensively damaged.

Also, on October 15, the armed forces of Armenia have intentionally shelled a funeral ceremony in the cemetery of the city of Tartar. As a result of this attack 4 civilians –Orujov Parviz (1989), Rustamov Vasif (1962), Zamanov Shakir (1988), Amirov Isgandar (1967) have been killed and four other civilians have been hospitalized with various injuries. Artillery shelling by the armed forces of Armenia of the Jamilly village of the Tartar district led to death of its two residents Anar Rasul oghlu (1994) and Guliyev Anar (1984). Shabanov Rasul (1972) was wounded and his house severely damaged.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.1lurer.am/en/2020/10/05/A-few-more-days-and-even-archaeologists-will-not-be-able-to-find-the-place-of-Ganja-Poghosyan/328058>



*Children wounded as a result of the missile attack on the city of Ganja (17-October-2020)*



*Injured residents of Ganja after the attack of the armed forces of Armenia*



*Result of the attack of the armed forces of Armenia on the city of Barda*



*Funeral of Aysu Iskandarly (born in 2013) killed by armed forces of Armenia in the Garayusifly village of the Barda district*



*Damage inflicted upon the civilian infrastructure in the city of Ganja*



*Destroyed residential area in Ganja (birdeye view)*



*Destroyed residential area in Ganja (birdeye view)*



*Operational-tactical missile exploded in the territory of the Ordubad district of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan*



*Mingachevir, located 40 km away from the conflict zone, which also hosts the largest water reservoir in the South Caucasus was targeted by Smerch rocket missiles by the armed forces of Armenia*



*Kindergarten in the Baharli settlement of the Aghdam district damaged as a result of artillery shelling by the armed forces of Armenia on October 26, 2020*





*The Garadaghly village school (Aghdam district) after the artillery shelling by the armed forces of Armenia on October 26, 2020*



## SECTION 4. CONCLUSIONS

The irrefutable evidences above reconfirm that attacks of the armed forces of Armenia on civilian population and infrastructure in Azerbaijan is of systemic and widespread nature. The statements by officials of Armenia and the so-called "representatives" of the illegal puppet regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan also prove that the deliberate armed attacks on Azerbaijani civilians and infrastructure have been preplanned and executed as a part of Armenia's war strategy.

The new phase of aggression by Armenia unleashed in the early morning of September 27, 2020, has already led to severe violations of human rights:

Armenia has been making use of missiles, artillery and other weapons to target the civilian settlements and objects as well as civilian infrastructure of vital importance deliberately, indiscriminately and systematically which is a gross violation of IHL and constitutes the war crime and crimes against humanity.

Armenia violated the right to life of the civilian population of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Art 2 of ECHR).

The deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure resulting from discrimination based on the nationality and ethnicity in a clear violation of Art 14 of ECHR. Of particular notice is a deliberate targeting of IDPs, their houses and other private property. Being victim to 1991-1994 ethnic cleansing committed by Armenia, they became target of Armenia yet another time. This constitutes the war crime and the crime against humanity.

During military operations, Armenia has intensively used weapons and methods prohibited by IHL. Medical facilities and vehicles have been targeted in violation of Article 35 of the First Geneva Convention of 1949.

Deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on educational facilities constitute a violation of Articles 51 and 52 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. This is also a violation of the right to education of schoolchildren residing in areas targeted by armed forces of Armenia as stipulated, inter alia, in Article 13 of 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Serious damage has been inflicted upon private property of civilians. As a result, their houses, livestock, vehicles and other private property have been destroyed and damaged, that constitutes a violation of their right to property (Art. 1 of Protocol 1 of ECHR).

This survey is far from being comprehensive covering the period from September 27-October 31, 2020. However, it demonstrates the range, variety and consistency of Armenia's violations of international human rights law and IHL. Armenia bears full responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity it has committed as a matter of the international law of State responsibility, which includes its agents and officials and those for whom it must be deemed liable by virtue of direct instruction.

**November 2, 2020**

## III. POST-CONFLICT DIPLOMACY

### Excerpts from the statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov at the 27th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

**December 4, 2020**

At the outset, I would like to congratulate H.E. Mr. Edi Rama, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania for the excellent organization of the 27th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council. I also wish every success to our distinguished colleague, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden H. E. Mrs. Ann Linde, as the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

In my capacity representing the Chairman-in-Office of the Turkic Council, I would like to express our gratitude to the Albanian Chairmanship for inviting the Cooperation Council and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic Speaking States to the Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, as guests. We firmly believe that their active participation in the work of the OSCE will contribute to the attainment of common goals shared by these organizations.

This year we commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, which form a common foundation of security for all participating States. The principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and reconfirmed in the Charter of Paris, in particular those related to sovereign equality, territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers, remain valid as ever before and form the basis for our relations.

Non-compliance with international law and with OSCE principles lie behind the immediate causes of violent conflicts, which continue to pose a serious threat to regional peace and security. On this solemn occasion, the participating States must reaffirm their commitment to ensuring unconditional respect for, and implementation of, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, without any exception, double standards, geographic or any other preferences.

The trilateral statement signed on 10 November 2020 between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia has created a ground for putting an end to the almost three-decades-long armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

I am pleased to inform the Ministerial Council that the implementation of this agreement ensured the cessation of all military activities and the return of the Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachin districts to Azerbaijan.

The 10 November Statement also contains an important provision related to the return of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to their homes under the supervision of the UNHCR.

The agreement also envisages the removal of obstacles to all economic and transport links in the region and guarantees for the safe movement of persons, vehicles and cargo between Armenia and Azerbaijan in both directions, including the connection between mainland Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

Under the trilateral statement, the Joint Monitoring Centre of the Russian Federation and Turkey will be established to monitor the implementation of agreements by Armenia and Azerbaijan.

I would like to thank the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey for their respective contributions to make this agreement a reality. These neighbouring states play an important role as guarantors of the above-mentioned agreement, implementation of which will ensure long-overdue peace and stability in the South Caucasus region.

Sustaining peace, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, providing humanitarian assistance to those in need, including returning IDPs and refugees, should be an absolute priority. To this end, Azerbaijan is ready to work with relevant international partners, including ICRC, UNHCR and other UN agencies as well as individual States, which are willing to contribute to peace and stability in the region, in full compliance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on humanitarian assistance of 1991.

Azerbaijan is resolute to re-integrate its citizens of Armenian origin residing in the territories of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan into its political, social, economic space, guaranteeing the same rights and freedoms with all the citizens of Azerbaijan regardless of their ethnic, religious affiliation on an equal and non-discriminatory basis. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides a solid legal framework in this regard.

Peaceful co-existence of Azerbaijani and Armenian residents of the conflict-affected territories based on respect to each other's security, ethnic and religious identity within the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must and shall be finally ensured.

We are entering a new post-conflict stage, a stage of reconstruction and rehabilitation, a stage of restoration of peaceful co-existence. New opportunities for development and cooperation are emerging. We call upon our colleagues and partners to assess and take advantage of the new promising realities.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

## Remarks by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the meeting with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs from France and the USA, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Azerbaijan and Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office\*

**December 12, 2020**

It has been a long time since we met last time last year. And a lot of things happened during this time because of the pandemic which changed the world completely, and the resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which changed the region. Now the situation in the region is completely new. Azerbaijan resolved the conflict, which lasted for almost 30 years, resolved by force and political means. And I can only agree with what president Putin said, the president of the one of the co-chair countries, that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is already in the history. I share this view. Unfortunately, Minsk Group did not play any role in resolution of the conflict, though, Minsk Group had a mandate to do it for 28 years. I participated in negotiations for the last 17 years. As I said, during the war, though there have been an activity of the Minsk Group, in elaborating ideas and trying to be creative, but there was no result. And this is a reality. Therefore, Azerbaijan resolved it itself. And by defeating Armenia on the battlefield, we forced aggressor to admit its defeat, to sign declaration which we consider as an act of capitulation of Armenia. And also, all the political forces of Armenia accepted, the ruling regime shares this view that this is a capitulation. They call it a humiliating capitulation. And full responsibility is on Pashinyan's dictatorship regime. As I said, I participated as a president for 17 years, I had experience in negotiating with previous Armenian presidents, and though, there have been no result, but, there was a process. Pashinyan ruined the process, he ruined the negotiation format. He tried to do it. His provocative statements and actions made negotiations absolutely meaningless. I several times referred to what he said and what he did and that was absolutely unacceptable. His provocative, insulting actions and statements against Azerbaijan and its people had to be addressed and we punished him severely. So, he had to admit his defeat, he had to plea for a ceasefire. Actually, that's what he was doing during these almost all 44 days of the war, and he was calling world leaders several times a day. It's very difficult to find any European leader whom he didn't call and he was asking for a ceasefire. But he did not want to implement my conditions, actually one condition. He put seven conditions to me, several months ago. I rejected them. I said I have only one-get out of our lands, otherwise, you will see the iron fist of Azerbaijan. So, during the war several times I said, as soon as Pashinyan himself, not his ministers, himself gives us a date when he will get out of our lands we will stop and that happened. I kept my word, as I always do. Pashinyan never kept his word. Neither in front of me, nor in front of his own people. He is a liar, and I think people of Armenia already knows that. And he continues to lie even now. But that is already has nothing to do with Azerbaijan. That is internal politics of Armenia. So, as soon as on 10th of November, the night from 9th to 10th of November he signed declaration, we stopped immediately. The next hour the war stopped. But we also gave time for withdrawal. And then, after the request from Russian President Vladimir Putin we even gave additional ten days for them to leave Kalbajar. Though, when Armenian gangs and Armenian army were ethnically cleansing Kalbajar, they didn't give a day to Azerbaijanis. They killed them, they forced them to leave. Azerbaijanis from Kalbajar had to go through the high mountains, 3500 meters high. That was the beginning of April, very cold and many

\* On December 12, 2020, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev received the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs Mr. Stephane Visconti (France), Mr. Andrew Schofer (USA), Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Mikhail Bocharnikov and Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Mr. Andrzej Kasprzyk.

of them got frost. So, we gave them additional time. What they have done? They started to burn the houses. The houses which they did not build. They started to destroy everything. I was informed just several days ago that they have destroyed all the water power stations which existed there, destroyed completely. They burned our forests. They cut our trees. They behaved, they continue to behave as barbarians. There is no other way how to name those who do it. But we kept our word, we stopped the war. If we did not stop the war, everybody knows what would have happen, Armenian army was completely destroyed, demoralized and had no means to do anything. We demonstrated courage, we demonstrated spirit, we demonstrated professionalism on the battlefield. We destroyed the myths Armenians were creating for decades about unbeatable Armenian army. We demonstrated that Azerbaijani army is unbeatable. Within 44 days we liberated big part of the occupied territories, including the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha. And more than 300 cities, villages, and other settlements. So we showed who is who. When I visited the liberated territories I just witnessed what I heard a lot about, and I have seen in some internet sites, what they have done to our territories. There has been no single building in Fuzuli, all the buildings were leveled to ground, there was no building even to put a flag, Azerbaijani flag on. In Aghdam, the only not completely destroyed building was the mosque. And when we started to investigate why they did not destroy it completely our people said that because they needed to have some building in Aghdam just to measure the distance, if Azerbaijani army goes on offensive. So, it will be easier for them to measure the distance. So, the mosque was a kind of an orienteer for them. But we didn't go to Aghdam, we went where they did not expect us. We came to Aghdam without one single bullet. So why I am telling that? Because this is true. First, because you visit us after more than one year. And I want to be open and very frank with you as I am open and frank with Azerbaijani people. During all these 44 days I was telling them the truth, only truth. Pashinyan was lying to his people and to his partners whom he talked several times a day regularly. And he continues to lie now. But as I said, it's no longer something which is of concern, we resolved the problem, we liberated our territory. During the war, I was many times asked about the losses of Azerbaijani army. I said we will disclose this information after the war is over. And we did it and the number of our heroes, our martyrs and their names and the photographs are now shown on TV. During the war I said that we have no intentions to occupy Armenian territory, though, as you can imagine we had all the opportunities to do it and still have, but we don't have these intentions. I was asked about that, I said no. We want to liberate our own territory. We will fight on our own land. And we kept our word. At the same time, I said that for us it's vital to have a direct land connections to Nakhchivan, and we achieved it by political means and Pashinyan signed declaration which provides connection between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan. This is also an important historical achievement for Azerbaijan. At the same time, it creates opportunities for future discussions about how region will be formed in the future. During the war, in numerous interviews with international media I was saying that we have nothing, no problems with Armenian people and our fight is with aggressors with those criminals who occupy our territory. Armenian people can live as they do by the way in different parts of Azerbaijan now in safety and dignity, and they will live well under our administration. We are seeing now after the war the villages where Armenians lived, extreme poverty. It's unbelievable how people lived there. What was the purpose of this occupation? Why Armenians needed for so many years to keep their own people like slaves. I don't know whether you had seen it or not, during the first days of the war, when Azerbaijani army was entering the trenches of Armenian army among the eliminated occupants, there have been people who were tied with chains to their legs. And these videos were shocking videos. They forced people to stay in the trenches, they did not allow those who wanted to run away, to go back, to leave their positions. They had special groups during the war which were standing behind the Armenian troops in order to kill their own people if they run, and they did it many times. They are war criminals. Attacking Ganja with ballistic missiles, and Barda, Tartar with cluster munitions and phosphorus bombs is a war crime. Illegal settlement on the occupied territories, which they did and which they were proud of, is a war crime. Sargsyan, Kocharyan are war criminals. And as

I said in front of the destroyed city mosque of Aghdam, we defeated Kocharyan and Sargsyan. They want to put a blame on Pashinyan. As I said, Pashinyan is no one. He is a person brought by this movement against the criminal Kocharyan-Sargsyan regime on top of the Armenian government. The person who has no experience, no knowledge, no understanding about international relations, about how to run the country. The person who never in his life was heading even a small Kolkhoz (collective farm). So, he is not the only one to blame. Yes, he provoked us. He did things which were unacceptable. And he was punished for that. But we defeated the army of Sargsyan and Kocharyan. They were creating this army for 30 years. So, these war crimes are now documented. We, of course, have already started legal procedures on what they have done to our cities, we already invited international partners to make a proper analysis of the damage they caused to civilians, to our infrastructure, to our historical and religious monuments. Everything will be documented and we will do what is necessary in these circumstances. So illegal settlement is a war crime. And Minsk Group twice officially organized the fact-finding mission to the occupied territories. Once it was called fact-finding and other time it was called field assessment mission. Andrzej knows, because he is a veteran of this process. He was there. At the same time, the Minsk Group co-chairs visited many times the occupied territories and witnessed the war crime of Armenian regime and witnessed the total destruction of our cities. It's not only Aghdam and Fuzuli, Jabrayil is the same. In Kalbajar and Lachin they were just using some of the houses just to settle and in Gubadli and Zangilan they were planning to settle Armenians from Syria whom they used as mercenaries. There were numerous facts in our hands about the mercenaries which Armenians used. I already said, whose residents these people are, don't want to repeat. But we have passports in our hands, and we have detected foreigners in our prison. So, all that, of course, raises a big question. Why was the conflict not resolved for so many years despite the resolutions of United Nations Security Council, decisions of OSCE, decisions of other international organizations? And three permanent members of UN Security Council could not use their leverage, use their potential to force Armenia to leave even from some of the territories. They could not, or they did not want. That's an open question. But now it doesn't make any difference. The conflict is resolved. Azerbaijan did it by military-political means. Many times I heard from you and from your leaders and from your high-ranking officials that there is no military solution to the conflict. I was saying there is, and the history shows that I was right. There is. There was. I think that those who were saying that there is no military solution they realized themselves that there was. They just wanted to keep everything as it is. There have been statements of the presidents of the Minsk Group co-chair countries, I think, some ten years ago. And we supported those statements. It created certain hopes. They were saying in the joint declaration, 'status-quo is unacceptable.' We said yes, good statement, let's work on that. Now tell it to Armenia. How many times I was telling you, your predecessors, go and tell Armenia to leave, put pressure on them. How many times I was telling high-ranking officials from your countries, go put pressure on them until it is not too late. But what happened? After certain time leaders of your countries changed this wording. They no longer said status-quo is unacceptable. They were saying status-quo is not sustainable. That means that for them status-quo was acceptable. What other explanation can we have? When they were saying in L'Aquila and in Muskoka the status-quo is unacceptable, and then they say the status-quo is unsustainable. Obviously, it means that they think the status-quo is acceptable.

Many politicians thought that the only way how to preserve peace is to keep status-quo and we changed it. And we showed that the status-quo can be changed by force, by courage, by wisdom, by policy, by concentration of efforts, by solidarity of Azerbaijani people, by the will of the Azerbaijani government and the spirit of Azerbaijani people and bravery of Azerbaijani soldier. We showed that we were right. And then, of course, Armenia was forced to sign the capitulation act. They would have never signed it voluntarily. We forced them, not Minsk Group, we, and President Putin. This is a reality. And if not for President Putin's intervention and efforts, today probably the situation

would be different. But we achieved what we planned. We returned all the seven occupied territories. We returned ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha, we returned Hadrut district, we returned part of Khojavand, we returned Sugovushan, and others, and actually achieved what we planned. Now, when Russian peacekeepers are there and started the activity the situation is more or less stable. Though, I just got information yesterday about some terrorist acts either by Armenian guerrilla forces or by remainings of what they called Armenian army. This, of course, is of concern, I think the last thing which Armenia should do is to start again. Two days ago on the military parade, which was devoted to our glorious victory, I said that if Armenian fascism raises its head once again, we will smash it with the iron fist. So, the last thing for them is to plan some military actions. We will destroy them completely this time. It should not be a secret for anyone. But I hope that it will not happen. So, peacekeeping mission, is enforced. You know that peacekeeping operations were part of the agreement which was discussed, part of the Madrid principles, but we never seriously discussed it, Andrzej knows as a veteran. We even never touched on that. We had some general exchange of views what could be the composition of the peacekeepers, which countries it may represent, should they be neighbours, should they be co-chairs. There were different opinions. And I personally never elaborated on that. Because I said that it's premature, we need to resolve the issue and then. And we never objected peacekeepers. We said yes, peacekeepers, they should come, and certain time protect the civilians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis. And it happens. And now, peacekeeping operations is done by Russia and it was supported by Armenia, and by Azerbaijan. At the same time, as you know, we are now already in the phase of creation of the monitoring centre in Aghdam district of Azerbaijan. The centre which also was reflected in the declaration, which we signed on the 10th of November. The Turkish-Russian monitoring centre, will monitor the ceasefire regime. And this, I think, is also a very good sign of regional cooperation, also, a good sign of cooperation between Turkey and Russia. And this already is a reality. The last point, which I also want to raise and I am sure you heard about that is our views for the future, for the future of the region I mean. I already a couple of times publicly addressed this issue that the region must have new dynamics and there should be new developments in the region. Azerbaijan is ready, Azerbaijan as a powerful from economic point of view, from military point of view country, as a country with very broad international support, the country which today is chairing the second after the United Nations international institutions, the Non-Aligned Movement, is of course will do its part of the job in order to provide long-lasting stability and security. But of course, it also will depend on Pashinyan regime or if this regime is overthrown on those who will come after. And I think, international community should deliver the direct messages to Armenia, first never ever in the future try to insult the feelings of Azerbaijani people. You will be severely punished. We are patient. We were preparing, we did everything properly, we did not respond to the first Armenian provocation in July the way how we could. We didn't cross the state border, though we could. We didn't seriously respond to the second Armenian provocation in August when they sent the sabotage group to kill our people. But we responded to the third one in September and responded in a way that we destroyed Armenian army and almost destroyed Armenian state and put an end to criminal regime, on our territory, put an end to dreams of Armenian nationalists about the so-called "Artsakh", it does not exist. Pashinyan said 'Karabakh is Armenia.' It was wrong and he deserved what he got. He deserved this humiliation. Our people, our country deserved victory. Because the truth, and international law was on our side. I will probably conclude now in order to listen to you. Because it was your idea to come. I can tell you again in front of the cameras, I did not invite the Minsk Group to come. But when I was informed that the Minsk Group wants to come, I said okay, I don't mind, maybe they have something to tell me. If you want to do it in front of the cameras, it's okay, if not, I can tell them to leave. It's up to you. Yes, I am listening to you.



## Commentary of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**December 23, 2020**

The Azerbaijani side has always been committed to cooperation with UNESCO, to fulfill its obligations under conventions to which it is adhered to, and in particular its commitments to protect cultural heritage.

For many years, our country has made significant contributions to the activities of the Organization in the restoration and conservation of cultural heritage, both in Azerbaijan and globally. Thus, the protection of cultural heritage is one of the important directions of state policy in Azerbaijan. The successful hosting of the last session of the World Heritage Committee in 2019 is a vivid indicator of the importance that Azerbaijan attaches to the protection of cultural heritage, as well as the confidence and trust of Member States in Azerbaijan. The first-ever UNESCO publication of the Military Manual on "Protection of Cultural Property in times of Armed Conflict " upon the initiative and support of the Republic of Azerbaijan is a clear example of the commitment of our country to the UNESCO values.

However, it has to be regrettably noted that during the 30 years of Armenia's military aggression against Azerbaijan and the occupation of our lands, our appeals to UNESCO to investigate war crimes such as the deliberate destruction, misappropriation, alteration of our cultural heritage, as well as illicit removal of our cultural properties by Armenia have been ignored and the UNESCO Secretariat has not demonstrated determination in this regard.

UNESCO has been repeatedly informed that Azerbaijan is considering the proposal of the organization to send a mission to the Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding districts of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It should be underlined that a number of factors, including providing security in the area, weather conditions and difficult terrain must be taken into account while organizing a UNESCO mission to the region to assess the damage to our cultural property. As it is known, the territories of Azerbaijan were mined by Armenia during the occupation and Armenia mined the area around historical and cultural monuments and turned the area into a dangerous zone while withdrawing its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan has launched preliminary monitoring of cultural property in the liberated Azerbaijani lands and the results of the initial monitoring have been officially submitted to UNESCO. The monitoring report has also included photos of the destruction of all our religious and cultural monuments as well as the desecration of our mosques in the territories once occupied by Armenia. We hope that UNESCO will not remain silent about the war crimes indicated in the abovementioned monitoring report.

We believe that UNESCO must fulfill its mandate in an independent and objective manner and not allow the issue of protection of cultural heritage to be politicized. Such statements by UNESCO do not comply with the spirit of cooperation between Azerbaijan and UNESCO.

Azerbaijan is open to a constructive dialogue with UNESCO in order to discuss the details of the mission and reiterates its readiness to cooperate with UNESCO based on the respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the Member States.

## **Letter dated 26 December 2020 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations H.E. Mr. António Guterres**

I am writing to share the following on the developments with regard to elimination of consequences of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of the trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation and Armenia on 10 November 2020.

The trilateral statement commits both Armenia and Azerbaijan to cease all military activities while taking a series of steps aiming at elimination of the decades-long conflict. Azerbaijan attaches vital importance to full implementation of the document, both in letter and in spirit, for the normalization of inter-State relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and healing the wounds of the bloody conflict.

Following the statement, Azerbaijan embarked on a large-scale plan for rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration of all its conflict-affected territories, including those inhabited by its citizens of Armenian origin, which is currently under the control of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation. The Government has already initiated practical steps to remove the harsh consequences of the military occupation of territories with a view to enabling a safe and dignified return of all displaced populations to their places of origin and restoring the peaceful co-existence of all its citizens affected by the conflict within the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is resolute to reintegrate its citizens of Armenian origin residing in conflict-affected territories into its political, social and economic space, guaranteeing the same rights and freedoms to all the citizens of Azerbaijan, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides a solid legal framework in this regard.

Against this background, Armenia's continuous destabilizing actions cause serious concern, which, if not reversed, run the risk of threatening the realization of the vision of peace, cooperation and development envisaged in the trilateral statement.

Thus, as a result of a joint anti-terror operation of the State Security Service and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan conducted in areas recently liberated from occupation, a sabotage group of the armed forces of Armenia was taken. Sixty-two members of the group were detained and are currently subject to investigation procedures by relevant State institutions of Azerbaijan. Initial interrogation reveals that the group, all members of which are citizens of Armenia, mainly from Shirak province, and conscripted to the armed forces of Armenia, was deployed in the Lachin district of Azerbaijan in late November, before its return to the control of Azerbaijan on 1 December 2020, under the trilateral statement.

Following the return of Lachin into Azerbaijani control the group was dislocated into areas deeper inside territory of Azerbaijan to organize terrorist activities against the military personnel of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan and civilians engaging in post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in the areas concerned. Five military servicemen of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan and one civilian personnel member of an Azerbaijani mobile telecommunication company were killed, and two more servicemen were wounded, as a result of a series of terrorist attacks conducted by the sabotage group in the liberated areas of the Khojavand district.

Deployment of an armed unit by Armenia into the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan is yet another blatant breach of Armenia's obligations under international law to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and refrain from the use of force. The fact that the sabotage group was deployed to the territory of Azerbaijan after the signing of the trilateral statement is a gross violation by this country of its commitment under the statement to cease all military activities and withdraw its armed forces from territories of Azerbaijan, and raises serious questions about the sincerity of Armenia to fulfil its commitments.

The actions of the above-mentioned nature demonstrate that the real intention of Armenia is to escape from the implementation of measures reflected in the trilateral statement and undermine the ongoing efforts for restoring peace and security in the region after decades-long bloody conflict. Such a serious blow to efforts aimed at stabilization of the situation on the ground must be unequivocally condemned by the international community.

It is in this context that I appeal to you with an urgent request to take all measures at your disposal to persuade Armenia to refrain from such destabilizing activities and withdraw all its armed forces from the territories of Azerbaijan.

It is our firm belief that the international community, led by the United Nations, has an important role to play in supporting implementation of the trilateral statement, which promises restoration of good neighbourly relations in the region. For this to become reality, the revisionist attitude by Armenia needs to be abandoned.

All efforts must be directed towards taking advantage of chances that emerged as a result of signing the trilateral statement to normalize inter-State relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia on the basis of respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of international borders.

Azerbaijan remains committed to the promotion of peace and security on this basis and counts on the support of all its international partners, including the United Nations.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## Remarks by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev after the trilateral meeting between the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia

**January 11, 2021**

Dear Vladimir Vladimirovich. First of all, I would like to thank you for this invitation and your initiative to hold this meeting. I share your opinion that the meeting was very important for the further sustainable and secure development of our region.

Two months have passed since the ceasefire was declared, and the fact that leaders of the three countries that signed the Statement on 9th-10th of November are meeting in Moscow today shows that we are determined to achieve the result and draw a line under the events of September and November. The statement signed today testifies to our intentions, because one of the clauses of the statement on the results of the cessation of hostilities had to do with the restoration of transport communications. This area can bring great dynamic to the development of the region and strengthen security. The opening of transport communications serves the interests of the peoples of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia and our neighbours. I am confident that neighbouring countries would also actively engage in the establishment of a diversified network of transportation corridors and arteries in our region. We must continue to identify areas of activity that are effective and result-oriented in the short term.

In general, I would like to say that the Joint Statement of 9th of November, or 10th of November as per Azerbaijan time, is being successfully implemented. Most of the provisions of that Statement have been implemented. The Russian peacekeeping mission is doing its job effectively and there has been no serious cause for concern over the past two months, except for minor incidents. All this gives us confidence that, as Vladimir Vladimirovich once said, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been consigned to history and we must think about the future, how to live together as neighbours, how to work to open transportation arteries and strengthen regional stability and security.

## Letter dated 22 February 2021 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations H.E. Mr. António Guterres

I am writing to draw your attention to serious threat emanating from massive contamination of recently liberated territories of Azerbaijan with mines and other explosive devices deployed by Armenia, and the latter's refusal to release information regarding the minefields in these territories.

During almost three decades of occupation of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan, Armenia massively laid mines in these territories, as a result of which there had been numerous casualties among the Azerbaijani military and civilians.

With a view to inflicting as much damage as possible, as well as creating additional obstacles for the return of civilians, Armenia has also deliberately planted mines at a massive scale during its forced withdrawal as a result of counter-offensive operation of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law. The mines and other explosive devices in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan pose a serious threat to life and safety of Azerbaijani military and civilians in the post-conflict period. Since the signing of trilateral statement by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on November 10, 2020, which announced an end to all military activities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, 15 citizen of Azerbaijan, including 9 civilian have been killed, 65 citizens, including 8 civilian have been seriously wounded as a result of mine explosions in the recently liberated territories.

Massive mine contamination of the liberated territories also seriously impedes the realization of wide-ranging rehabilitation and reconstruction plans the Government of Azerbaijan has embarked on. Most importantly, it affects the realization of inalienable right of the hundreds of thousands of IDPs to return to their homes in safety and dignity. Although Armenia and Azerbaijan signed the document on cessation of military activities on 10 November 2020, Armenia refuses to release the information concerning the location of minefields. This is a blatant violation of Armenia's obligation under customary international humanitarian law. Human costs inflicted by Armenia-planted mines cannot but constitute a war crime.

The release of information by Armenia on the location of minefields is an absolute necessity so as to avoid further loss of innocent lives, to move forward towards a speedy post-conflict reconstruction and thereby help a lasting peace. Armenia's consistent disregard to our repeated appeals to release the information on location of minefields seriously questions that country's sincerity for normalization of relations with Azerbaijan on the basis of mutual recognition of and respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of international borders.

This destructive stance of Armenia is not an isolated case. As I informed you previously, Armenia has also resorted to other destabilizing actions and statements aiming at undermining the emerging perspectives of regional peace and security, such as the deployment of a sabotage group into the territories of Azerbaijan to commit terror acts against Azerbaijan after almost two weeks of the signing of the trilateral statement, whom it cynically requests to release.

In light of the above-mentioned, I appeal to you with an urgent request to take all measures at your disposal to persuade Armenia to live up to its obligation under customary international law releasing information regarding the location of minefields, and cease all actions and statements impeding the realization of the vision of peace, security and cooperation envisaged in the trilateral statement.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## **Excerpts from the statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov delivered at the High-Level Segment of the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council**

**February 23, 2021**

2021 has been proclaimed as the International Year of Peace and Trust by the relevant United Nations General Assembly resolution. This year will also be remarkable for Azerbaijan since it enters into post-conflict recovery and rehabilitation phase following the liberation of its territories from almost 30 years lasting occupation.

Having exploited the political settlement process, as well as Azerbaijan's commitment to this process for almost 30 years, Armenia took consistent steps to consolidate the results of occupation of territories of Azerbaijan aiming at their annexation. This included, among others, implantation of settlers into the occupied territories, destruction, pillage and looting of historical and cultural heritage, illegal exploitation of natural resources, misappropriation of private and public property in the seized lands. Series of grave crimes have been committed by Armenia against the civilian population of Azerbaijan, as well as its cultural heritage and infrastructure throughout the years of occupation.

The recent aggression by Armenia starting from 27 September 2020 against Azerbaijan was not an exclusion. It was accompanied by grave violations of international humanitarian law tantamount to war crimes and crimes against humanity in order to seed the panic among the civilian population of Azerbaijan. For this purpose Armenia deliberately attacked the densely populated civilian settlements of Azerbaijan located far from the conflict zone, as a result of which 101 civilians were killed more than 400 seriously injured. There have also been undeniable facts depicting a number of human rights violations by Armenian servicemen against Azerbaijani captives, including acts of humiliation and ill-treatment, such as physical assault, verbal abuse, executions through beheadings, and ill-treatment of dead bodies. Azerbaijan is determined to take all measures stemming from its rights under relevant bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice.

Armenia in an open attempt to cover-up its above-mentioned wrongdoings, brazenly accuses Azerbaijan of the same with a view to diverting the attention of the international community, and to that end carries out a massive campaign of fake news. UN human rights mechanisms, including the OHCHR, treaty bodies and mandate holders have also been subjected by Armenia to its fake propaganda.

De-occupation of territories of Azerbaijan paves the way for hundreds of thousands of displaced persons to exercise their right to safe and dignified return to their places of origin. Yet, unprecedented magnitude of destruction of public and private property, critical civilian infrastructure, including educational and medical facilities, as well as historical and cultural heritage and environment in the conflict affected territories places a huge task ahead of the Government of Azerbaijan in terms of rehabilitation and reconstruction of these territories. The Government has already initiated practical steps in order to enable safe and dignified return of the displaced population and ensure peaceful co-existence within the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is resolute to re-integrate its citizens of Armenian origin residing in the conflict-affected territories into its political, social, economic space, guaranteeing the same rights and freedoms with all the citizens of Azerbaijan regardless of their ethnic, religious affiliation. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides the solid legal framework, in this regard.

Sustaining peace, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, providing humanitarian assistance to those in need, including returning IDPs and refugees, should be absolute priority. To this end, Azerbaijan is ready to work with relevant international partners, including ICRC, UNHCR and other UN agencies as well as individual States willing to contribute to peace and stability in the region, in full compliance with the UN Guiding Principles on humanitarian assistance of 1991.

Such an approach is based on international law, relevant resolutions and documents regulating UN's activities in the fields of humanitarian assistance, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction, and will serve as a confidence-building measure aimed at healing the wounds of the conflict.

The Trilateral Statement of 10 November 2020 signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia commits both Armenia and Azerbaijan to cease all military activities while taking series of steps aiming at elimination of the decades-long conflict. Azerbaijan attaches vital importance to full implementation of this document both in letter and spirit and to healing the wounds of the bloody conflict on the basis of normalization of inter-state relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

It is our firm belief that the international community, led by the UN, has an important role to play in supporting implementation of the Trilateral Statement, which promises restoration of good neighbourly relations in the region.

## Excerpts from the remarks by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the press conference with local and foreign media representatives

February 26, 2021



**Introductory remarks by President Ilham Aliyev:** It is the 29th anniversary of the Khojaly genocide today. The Khojaly tragedy is a bloody crime, an act of genocide Armenia committed against the Azerbaijani population. As a result of the genocide, 613 civilians were killed with special brutality. Among them were 106 women and 63 children. Those who committed the Khojaly genocide are war criminals. Many of them were killed by the Azerbaijani army in the second Karabakh war.

The Khojaly genocide was a manifestation of Armenian fascism. At that time, Armenian fascism was raising its head and dealt a huge blow to the Azerbaijani people from 1992 until the recent events. The military provocations, the acts of terror, the brutality against civilians, the shelling of our cities and villages, as well as the bombing of peaceful cities with ballistic missiles during the second Karabakh war – all these are manifestations of Armenian fascism.

The Khojaly genocide is recognized by the international community. More than 10 countries have officially recognized and confirmed what happened as an act of genocide, and this process continues. The Azerbaijani state, as well as public organizations of our country, are very active in this area. There is comprehensive information in the world about the Khojaly genocide today. The war crimes of the Armenian state have been documented. Video and photographic materials have been presented to a fairly broad audience. The whole world sees and knows that the Azerbaijani people were subjected to genocide at the end of the 20th century.



By committing the Khojaly genocide, Armenia essentially wanted to break the will of the Azerbaijani people. It is no coincidence that the leaders of Armenia, the war criminals, when answering a question about that in an interview with foreign journalists, noted with a sense of pride that Armenia had indeed committed this war crime against the civilian population, so that the Azerbaijani people could see that the Armenian leadership could also raise its hand against the civilian population. We, for our part, have avenged the victims of Khojaly on the battlefield. Having defeated the Armenian army in the 44-day second Karabakh war and liberated our historical lands from invaders, we also avenged the victims of Khojaly. Azerbaijan as a strong state will never allow Armenian fascism to raise its head again, although such tendencies are discernible. Azerbaijan through its activities is contributing to the further development of the region and taking tangible steps to fully establish stability in the region.

Numerous events are being held in Azerbaijan these days, and a large group of journalists has come to Azerbaijan from abroad to cover them. I would like to express my gratitude to you for being in Azerbaijan today to cover these events, to cover this act of genocide. I also know that some of you have visited the liberated lands and seen this destruction with your own eyes. You will continue to travel there. Thank you very much again for that.

I was informed that foreign journalists want to meet with me and do an interview. Given their large number, I decided to meet with them in this format. Of course, the pandemic does affect our work as well, but I believe that this direct connection will allow me the opportunity to answer questions of interest to journalists. Please.

**Azerbaijan Television:** *First of all, I would like to express our gratitude for this opportunity. You have already noted that in the 29 years since the Khojaly genocide was committed, parliaments of many countries, as well as international organizations, have assessed this massacre as an act of genocide. How would you currently assess the attitude of the international community towards the Khojaly genocide. How would you assess their position? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** You know, many international organizations have expressed their attitude to this bloody event on Azerbaijan's initiative, and work in this direction will be continued. Of course, when the genocide was committed, Azerbaijan was practically in an information blockade. There were no modern possibilities at the time. Therefore, this issue was not very clear for many, especially if you consider that Azerbaijan did not have great opportunities in the international arena in those years. In contrast to this, the Armenian lobby was working hard to circulate false and distorted information about the events that took place. The international community developed certain misconceptions. Of course, we had to make great efforts to change and refute those opinions, and, as I have already noted, our state and public organizations have consistently carried out this activity in recent years. Among public organizations, of course, I would like to specifically note the activities of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. Under the "Justice for Khojaly!" slogan, various events were held in many countries, and there is complete information about the Khojaly tragedy in countries of the world. Our main goal is that this bloody crime is never forgotten, so that it is not repeated in Azerbaijan or elsewhere in the world, so that Azerbaijan never finds itself in such a helpless situation as it did in early 1990s, so that Azerbaijan is always able to protect itself and its citizens.

I believe that there is already comprehensive information about the Khojaly genocide in the world today, although the Armenian side, spreading false information in various ways, tried to blame for this bloody crime the Azerbaijani state. Allegedly, Azerbaijan perpetrated the Khojaly genocide itself. We saw a repeat of these actions in the second Karabakh war. By bombing Ganja, Tartar, Aghdam

and other cities, the Armenian leadership said that Azerbaijan had done it itself. Meanwhile, the launch of ballistic missiles is tracked by satellites, and large states, primarily the Minsk Group co-chair countries, watched this entire picture. Ballistic missiles were fired at Ganja, Tartar, Barda and other cities from the territory of Armenia. So yet another attempt was made to spread Armenian lies, but it did not work because the situation is completely different today, and we have the opportunity to communicate information.

Therefore, I am absolutely convinced that the whole world will learn the truth about the Khojaly genocide over the years, and this is our goal. We will continue to strive for the countries of the world to officially recognize this genocide as an act genocide. Consistent work in this direction will be continued.

**“TRT Haber” TV channel (Turkey):** *Mr. President, first of all, we pay tribute to the memory of the martyrs of Khojaly. Once again, we congratulate you on the Victory in Karabakh. In the immediate aftermath of this Victory, there has been constant internal political strife in Armenia. How would you assess this issue, the events in Armenia? Could those events negatively affect the format of cooperation proposed by you and President Erdogan? On the other hand, does Azerbaijan plan to step up military measures if there is a change of power?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** The events taking place in Armenia are an internal affair of Armenia. Yesterday, in my speech at a meeting with martyr families, I touched upon the situation in Armenia as well. However, I want to say that I made my remarks before the events. In other words, my meeting with martyr families was held at about 10:30, and I learned about the events in Armenia after that. Therefore, I want everyone to know: my comments were made before these events.

However, the events show that I was absolutely right. Because Armenia today is in such a difficult situation that the processes taking place there to a large extent undermine the foundations of the country's statehood. The previous and current leaders of Armenia are to blame for this, because the Kocharyan-Sargsyan junta actually led Armenia to an abyss and crisis for 20 years. The country has practically lost all signs of independence. It resembled a colony. The main reason for this is the occupying policy because the longer they tried to keep our lands under occupation, the deeper their dependent position became.

We have consistently isolated Armenia from all international and regional projects. Our policy was to economically undermine, destroy and isolate Armenia. I have never concealed this and have repeatedly said that as long as our lands remain under occupation, we will pursue this policy. I said that Armenia should withdraw its armed forces from our lands. Only after that can there be interaction and cooperation in the region and can our policy change. Unfortunately, neither the previous junta nor the government that came to power in 2018 heeded these calls. If they had listened to me in due time, they would not be in such a shameful position now.

There is a total crisis in Armenia today. I would not like to somehow comment on their internal situation. In principle, we never interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, especially at this sensitive time, but the results of the war remain and will remain unchanged. The statement signed on 10 November is being executed and must be fully implemented. A significant part of the provisions of this Statement has already been implemented. But there are issues that are a topic of discussion today. I hope that despite the situation in Armenia, the statement signed on 10 November will be implemented. Otherwise, Armenia will find itself in an even more difficult situation. In other words, there is not so much choice before Armenia. They need to come to terms with the new reality. We have created the new reality.

For 30 years, international organizations dealing with this issue, as well as individual countries, were sending us open or unofficial messages that there is reality that Azerbaijan is the side that has lost in the war and that we, as they believed, should come to terms with the reality. Try to choose the most acceptable option for yourself from this reality, i.e. something between a bad and a very bad option. We, as you know, have always rejected such calls, never deviated from our position, and I openly declared that. And now I am saying that a new reality has taken shape and that we have created this new reality. Armenia, as well as all other countries, must come to terms with this reality. Armenia has several options today, and the most acceptable of them is to fulfill the provisions of the Statement of 10 November. Otherwise, they may face even bigger problems.

**TASS agency (Russia):** *Good afternoon, Mr. President. Not so long ago, there was a report on the start of construction of an airport in Fuzuli. Can you confirm that such work is under way, that nothing impedes it, when it may be commissioned and if this airport will be international?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. As for the airport in Fuzuli, work has already begun. We promptly started dealing with the issues related to mine clearance. Because, first of all, it was necessary to clear the territory there. This process is already close to completion, and the airport will be put into operation in operational terms – at least its runway and navigation systems that would ensure the functioning of the airport. The airport will be international. The runway will be able to accommodate all types of aircraft, including the heaviest cargo planes. The construction of the airport – of course, it is difficult to predict this because the issues related to mine clearance and access to this territory cause difficulties. However, we expect it will be commissioned this year. We want it to be commissioned early in the fall. If everything goes according to plan, the airport will be put into operation in early fall of this year. This will allow us the opportunity to use it both for the restoration of territories, taking into account the goods that we will receive from abroad, and for convenient access of citizens of neighbouring states to the city of Shusha. Because along with the airport, we are also building two highways to the city of Shusha. One of them, which I called the “Road of Victory”, is exactly the path along which the Azerbaijani Special Forces marched to the city of Shusha through forests and valleys. And the other road will run on a lower plane and also provide direct access from the airport. Therefore, I am sure that the Azerbaijanis living abroad, as well as citizens of other countries, will have this opportunity.

I should also say that our plans on the construction of airports are not limited only to the city of Fuzuli. We also have plans for the construction of airports in Lachin and Zangilan, taking into account the plans for the development of the territory and also taking into account the fact that Zangilan will turn into a very important logistical centre. Because, as you know, one of the provisions of the Statement of 10 November last year was the opening of a corridor on the territory of Armenia, which would connect Azerbaijan with its Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan. At the same time, it will connect Azerbaijan with Turkey and Russia with Turkey. Therefore, we have major plans, and we will implement them. This year, a special investment program for the restoration of territories was approved, and it is quite extensive. We are already starting to make first payments under the contracts signed.

**Ukraine-24 TV channel:** *Mr. President, good afternoon. I am a journalist for “Ukraine-24” TV channel. With your permission, I have a question. Ukraine has been following the events in Azerbaijan all the time. Your experience is very important to us. Hopefully, we will also return our territories in the near future. So here is the question. Could you please tell us what difficulties Azerbaijan is facing now during the reintegration of liberated territories? I know that immediately after the end of hostilities there were attempts at sabotage and subversive partisan activities. How was this issue resolved? And*

*how are you resolving the issue of returning civilians there, so that they could live peacefully and safely? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** You are right. According to our data, after the hostilities ended, a detachment of more than 60 people was dispatched from Armenia, from Shirak region, from the city of Gyumri and surrounding regions in the last 10 days of November. It is not clear how, but it made its way into the territories controlled by the Azerbaijani army through the Lachin corridor. As you know, after the end of hostilities, on 10 November, the peacekeeping troops of the Russian Federation published maps showing the areas of responsibility of the peacekeepers. These maps are always on the web site. So after the end of hostilities, we discovered that there were Armenian armed formations in the deep rear. First, we received information that they had lost their way, that they could not get out of the encirclement, and for some time the Azerbaijani servicemen, together with the peacekeeping mission, thinking that they were lost, tried to help these people and take them back. But it turned out that this was not the case. It turned out that it was a sabotage group that carried out attacks both on our military personnel and on civilians. As a result of their acts of sabotage and terrorist attacks, four of our servicemen and one civilian was killed. He was a representative of a mobile operator who was ambushed while traveling to the city of Shusha. Several people were also wounded.

Of course, we carried out a counter-terrorist operation, as a result of which several terrorists were completely neutralized and more than 60 were captured. When some people try to describe them as prisoners of war today, I think they are deliberately distorting the essence of the issue. There cannot be a prisoner of war 20 days after the war. We returned them all the prisoners of war we had. In fact, we returned them earlier than they returned ours. These people do not fall into this category. These are terrorists and saboteurs. So any speculation on the part of Armenia or some countries is inappropriate.

As for other complications, we certainly do not guarantee that other sabotage groups will not infiltrate. But so far we provide a sufficient level of security of the liberated territories, conduct regular raids and monitoring – both using unmanned aerial vehicles and visual monitoring. Therefore, the situation is fully under control.

Besides this, of course, the main difficulty is mining. Because the Armenian side did not provide us with maps of minefields. This, in fact, can also be considered a crime because we have had several cases both among military personnel and among civilians when people died after the end of hostilities only because we were not provided with maps of minefields. With the resources we have today, it is impossible to ensure rapid demining. So here too, of course, we see the Armenian side acting insincerely yet again, as it says one thing and does something different.

We handed over the prisoners of war to them and bodies of the dead to them. After the war, more than a thousand bodies of Armenian servicemen were found in the liberated territories together with representatives of the Armenian side, the peacekeeping mission and our representatives, and they were handed over to the Armenian side. We act in accordance with the norms of morality and universal human behaviour. But not to give us maps of minefields means to deliberate doom civilians and military personnel to death and injury. What kind of cooperation can we talk about? In this case, cooperation cannot be one-sided.

Another issue we are discussing today is, of course, the timetable for the return of former refugees to the territories from which they were expelled. But in addition to minefields, everything is still

completely destroyed there. The entire infrastructure is destroyed, there are no cities and there is nowhere to return. All villages are practically destroyed. I have repeatedly visited the liberated territories. You drive hundreds of kilometres by car and see only destroyed villages. There is not a single safe building. There is not a single building in Aghdam except for a dilapidated mosque and even that was used as a reference point for adjusting the fire, as an observation post – they looked to see if there was any advance of Azerbaijani troops. There is not a single building in Fuzuli. There wasn't even a place to hang a flag. We eventually hung it on a flagpole. The same applies to Jabrayil. Several houses partly remain in Zangilan and Gubadli, where there were illegal settlements. Therefore, we are now engaged in demining. In parallel, we are assessing the damage using all the possibilities, including drones, in order to present justified claims to the invaders through international institutions. In parallel with this, instructions have already been issued to draw up master plans for the development of cities and villages. Therefore, these are the main stages for the return of our citizens.

We have also started pilot projects. One project has already started – it is a “smart village”. We want to create the most comfortable opportunities in the liberated territories for those who have been deprived of their land for 30 years. They deserve it, they deserve to live in dignity and enjoy all the benefits of the modern world. We have both the political will and financial resources to restore these territories, and we will do it.

**CNN-Türk TV channel:** *It is the anniversary of an important date today. When the Khojaly genocide was committed, when civilians were killed in the Karabakh war, many countries were silent. I would like to hear your thoughts about the fact that the world was silent when the tragedy was unfolding here. The second question is what is being done in Karabakh now. People who were forced to leave their lands 30 years ago are waiting to return to their native lands. Has a date been set in this regard? Have you prepared any road map or plan? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. You are absolutely right. When the Khojaly genocide was committed, the world was silent. One of the reasons for this was probably the lack of information that existed at the time. Information related to the war was lop-sided. Armenia used its propaganda, while the Azerbaijani side was in a completely helpless state because we did not have the foundations of statehood at the time. Azerbaijan was then in an uncontrollable state. The then Azerbaijan resembled today's Armenia – incompetent management, crisis, lack of discipline in the army. The army was actually out of the government's control. We see the same picture in Armenia today. Our options were very limited back then. This was one reason. Another reason was that the world did not want to see this because, as we realized later, it was a picture that somewhat contradicted the prevailing stereotypes. Because when the first Karabakh war began, one might say that most countries believed that Armenia was right and Azerbaijan was wrong. Questions of territorial integrity were set aside and the question of self-determination of nations came to the fore. No-one asked the question: after all, the Armenian people have already determined themselves, they have an independent Armenian state, so why a second Armenian state should be created on historical Azerbaijani land? Nobody has been able to answer this. Therefore, these stereotypes continued to exist for many years. Over the years, we were treated unfairly. Have a look – after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US Congress passed the Freedom Support Act. This law was adopted with the aim of providing assistance to all former Soviet republics. Azerbaijan was excluded from there. Who did that! Representatives of the Armenian lobby. Many of them are still in high positions today. This was done under the pretext that Azerbaijan was allegedly keeping Armenia in a blockade. How could we do this if our lands were occupied? But sanctions were imposed against us. They remain valid to this day. They even have a reference number – Section 907. Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act implies sanctions

against us. Could there be such injustice? Those who were in power at that time simply could not do anything to prevent this. It took us many years to change the mind of the world and present the truth. See how much effort we have put in to prove the obvious truth. The stereotype was that Armenia is always right. Whatever it did, it was always justified. Look how many opposition leaders have been arrested in Armenia over the past few years, how many people have had their rights breached. There were even political killings. Has any international organization condemned them? Not! They are allowed to do anything. We proved our case in struggle and succeeded. Your current visit to Azerbaijan and the communication of our position to the world are, of course, a great contribution to the restoration of justice.

As for your second question – when will our compatriots be able to return to their lands? You know, I ask myself the same question probably every day because I also want to achieve this as soon as possible. But for this to happen, of course, it is necessary to take comprehensive measures. I have already talked about this. At the end of the demining process, and in parallel with this, we are already beginning this work. The implementation of the “smart village” project has already begun. This project will be implemented in three villages of Zangilan district – Aghali 1, Aghali 2 and Aghali 3. I have ordered to fully complete the project by the end of this year. About 1,000 people will be accommodated there. All the necessary infrastructure will be created, cultivated areas will be restored and people will return there. There may be many such pilot projects. We are working on that now.

As for the return to the cities, it is necessary to draw up master plans for the cities, of course. For example, the city of Aghdam. Before the war, it was home to about 40,000 people. Today the population has increased and now exceeds 50,000. We must plan a city of 50,000, perhaps even 70,000 people, and create the right infrastructure there. After that, buildings must be constructed, including schools and hospitals. So this takes a long time. I want to say again: for us it is a race against time, because we have the means. We also mobilized all our resources. However, time, of course, dictates its will. I would not like to name any dates. Although there are some dates in my mind, I would not like to delight people ahead of time, to excite some perhaps. But trust me that we will gradually return people to these regions as soon as possible. At the same time, a list of villages in the liberated territories is being drawn up, and they will be first to be restored. We are working hard on this issue as well.

**Global Journalism Council (Turkey):** *Mr. President, first of all, thank you very much for receiving us here. The Global Council of Journalists of Turkey has offices in 40 countries. Azerbaijan is one of them. I came here together with representatives of foreign media, with foreign journalists, as the head of an organization headquartered in Ankara and with an office in Istanbul. We have a thank you plaque for you. It will be passed on to you. As for my question, as the victorious Commander-in-Chief, you successfully completed the 44-day Patriotic war, which, as you said, was seriously opposed by the international community. Congratulations on this! Naturally, the subsequent process is very important. The war is over. However, the international community is of the opinion that without a complete determination of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, this war will never end. Do you think this war has really ended? After that, will the two countries and two peoples have good-neighbourly relations? What processes will come after that? This is a part of my question. Secondly, as you know, the Russian-Turkish Joint Monitoring Centre has been set up. What does this centre do? What is it doing? This is interesting too. Does this centre have any functions? What responsibilities does it have? We know about Turkey's role in the 44-day war. We know the obligations it has assumed. But what will Turkey's mission be after peace? Can you talk about this? Thank you. I express my deepest respect and consideration for you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. First of all, I would like to answer your question about the status. I have already spoken about this and I will say it again: the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is over. Azerbaijan was a party to this conflict. We explicitly state that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has already been resolved. Azerbaijan has resolved it. Negotiations that lasted 30 years yielded no result. Although the Minsk Group carried out activities, the result was zero. Over the past two years, the Minsk Group co-chairs actually did not know what to do themselves. The inappropriate and very dangerous statements of the Armenian prime minister actually paralyzed their activities and made them meaningless. If the prime minister of Armenia says that “Karabakh is Armenia, full stop,” then what process can there be after that? What kind of negotiations can we talk about? In essence, this put the Minsk Group co-chairs in a very difficult situation. Because they had to react to it somehow. In fact, no negotiations were held in the past two years. In other words, Azerbaijan resolved this issue on its own. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been resolved. This is confirmed by the Statement signed on 10 November.

As for the status, I specified the address of the status in my previous speeches. I do not want to return to this question any more. Everyone knows where the status is. I believe that the less often this issue is mentioned, the better it will be for Armenia and the Armenian people. Because Armenia and the Armenian people should not be given false promises. One of the reasons why they are in this situation now is precisely this – myths, claims and unfounded desires. Politicians of some foreign countries who supported these aspirations also played a role in the fact that the Armenian people found themselves in such a miserable situation. Therefore, the issue of status should be completely removed from the agenda. Nagorno-Karabakh is ancestral Azerbaijani land. As a matter of fact, we should not be using the words “Nagorno-Karabakh” at all today. Karabakh with its flat and mountainous parts is an integral part of Azerbaijan. The Armenian people live in one part of it. We don't mind this even though the Armenian population was resettled there in the 19th century. We don't mind that. Armenians also live in our other places and there are no problems. Therefore, as far as the status is concerned, I believe that if anyone raises this issue today, then it does not serve peace, but rather confrontation. We have a clear idea of the further coexistence of the Azerbaijani and Armenian peoples. I spoke about this during the war, more than once.

Unfortunately, we did not hear such statements from Armenian leaders during the war. On the contrary, there were statements full of hostility and hatred. Meanwhile, I was saying that we have no problems with the Armenian people. Armenians are our citizens. Thousands of Armenians live in Azerbaijan. Our treatment of Armenian prisoners during the war confirms this again. I will give you one example. Two lonely elderly Armenian people remained in one of the liberated villages. In other words, “heroic” Armenian soldiers fled, leaving them behind – a woman and a man. They were very old. We brought them here and placed them in the hospital. Then we contacted the Armenian side, saying that we want to transfer them at the state border. When we brought them to the state border, they accepted the elderly woman, but did not take the old man. They said he was already sick. They said they couldn't look after him. He has no relatives, and if we accept him, who will look after him? Just look at the degree of immorality! No matter how hard we tried – the Red Cross is a witness to this, we did it with the participation of the Red Cross – they refused. This elderly man stayed with us. The Red Cross, with our help, placed him in the hospital. Despite our best efforts, he died after a while.

We did that too. What was their answer? Therefore, we declare today, and I, as President, say that we have a long track record of living together with the Armenian people – in Armenia, in Azerbaijan and in other countries. For example, there are villages in Georgia where Azerbaijanis and Armenians live together. There is no disagreement between them. The same applies to Russia, Ukraine and Europe. This is our position. But this is not a one-sided question. The Armenian people should also be ready

for this. Unfortunately, the Armenian people have been so disillusioned that great efforts must be made to get rid of this disease.

As for the activities of the Russian-Turkish Monitoring Centre, I can say that this is partly reflected in the statement signed on 10 November. It did not specify that there would be a Russian-Turkish monitoring centre. But when agreeing this statement, we stipulated that. Azerbaijan has created this monitoring centre near the village of Marzili in Aghdam district at its own expense. All conditions have been created. As you know, the monitoring centre is now in operation and its main goal is to exercise control in the post-war period, to conduct monitoring using drones in order to prevent any confrontation in this conflict zone and, if this happens, to establish who was the instigator, who is guilty. So far, with the exception of the sabotage group sent to Azerbaijan, as I mentioned earlier, there has been no serious confrontation. I believe that this monitoring centre will function as a very important instrument for the post-war period.

Your next question was related to the activities of the Turkish side. What will be the mission of Turkey, as you said? From the first days, Turkey has demonstrated very positive conduct, conduct designed for peace and stability. At the same time, Turkey supported Azerbaijan in its rightful cause from the first days. My dear brother, dear President, made very clear statements in the very first days. So did other officials – the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, other ministers, the President of the Grand National Assembly. All these statements, this political and moral support gave us strength and, at the same time, were a very serious message for many. Turkey is showing a very positive attitude even after the war. Even yesterday, Turkish officials made statements regarding the situation in Armenia. Today, Turkey is aware of the meetings held between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia at the level of deputy prime ministers because these meetings are significant for the entire region. Both Turkey and Iran, and Georgia, if there is such a desire in the future, can join the common platform. Turkey as a global power centre plays a very positive role in all regions, including ours, and this is very important for stability in the region.

**RIA Novosti news agency (Russia):** *Good afternoon, Mr. President. We recently visited Lachin district, and it was for the first time for me. What is impressive at first glance, of course, is the beautiful and wonderful places, and we understand that they have great potential. But at the same time, we understand that in spite of what is there now, there is a lot of work ahead to restore these lands. Directly related to this process, of course, is the process of demining of these territories after the war. Perhaps these numbers have already been announced, but data may have emerged. How many territories still need to be cleared and what timeframe do you set for that? And as a representative of the Russian media, I would like to know if negotiations are under way, and if so, which Russian companies can take part in the process of restoring infrastructure on these lands? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. We are only at the beginning of the journey in mine clearance. We have cleared only a few thousand hectares so far. I ordered to establish new military units, new sapper and engineering battalions of the Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan, and they have already been established. We recently purchased modern equipment from Turkey. It has already been delivered to Azerbaijan and will greatly facilitate this work for us. In parallel with this, I recently signed an order on the establishment of the State Agency for Mine Action. Before that, we had an agency the status of which was rather uncertain. It was called ANAMA. It was established during the existence of a commission on the restoration of liberated territories. So in order to strengthen this work, we have created a state agency. It has already been formed. This year, we are allocating about 100 million manats in the investment program, so that the agency could work effectively. Among other things, the most modern equipment will be purchased, including remotely operated units –



robots and mine-clearing machines. So we will do our best to tackle this. In other words, one area is the Ministry of Defense and the second is the State Agency for Mine Action.

Also, more than 100 specialists from the Turkish Ministry of Defence were sent here immediately after the war to participate in mine clearance and trainings for our sappers. A group of the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations is also involved in mine clearance in Aghdam District. The Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations mainly works on the territory that is the responsibility of the Russian peacekeepers, but they are also involved here. We are currently in talks with several companies with experience in this field, but these negotiations are not over yet. A process of approvals is currently under way. So we will make the most of all the possibilities. By the way, when appointing the head of the agency, I also said that we want Azerbaijani companies to participate in this as well. Because this work is not for one year, unfortunately. The area to be cleared is quite large. Therefore, local companies will also join.

As for the methodology, it exists here. There is international experience as to what should be cleared of mines first of all. These are communications, settlements and places for agricultural activities. By the way, I should say that we have already begun agricultural activities in the liberated territory. Winter crops have already been sown on an area of more than 7,000 hectares. To do this, the area was previously cleared of mines. So we are ready for broad international cooperation. I know that a lot of proposals are coming from various companies, but there are two key factors here, as in many other issues – quality and price. A combination of these two factors, of course, will decide our preference to this or that company.

As for the other question about the participation of Russian companies in the restoration, I have already made statements on that. We will attract companies from friendly countries. Russia and Azerbaijan are friendly countries. Therefore, naturally, Russian companies will be involved. I think that they may also be interested. We are already receiving applications from various countries for certain types of work. This applies to urban planning. This also applies to the construction of facilities, including infrastructure facilities, roads, bridges, power plants. So the scope of work is immense. The territory of more than 10,000 square kilometres has been liberated. Therefore, I think there is enough work for all the friends of Azerbaijan.

**Public Television (Azerbaijan):** *Mr. President, the counter-offensive operation of the Azerbaijani Army in response to Armenia's yet another aggression attempt on 27 September ended with a brilliant victory for our army. After the war, Azerbaijan has been busy with repair and restoration work in the territories liberated from occupation and is working on new platforms for multilateral regional cooperation. How would you assess the prospects for the development of the region after the war and what benefits will this bring to our country and other countries of the region?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** I have a very positive assessment of the situation. I believe that there are unique opportunities for the further development of the region today, because, I want to say again, we believe, and so do many of our partners that the war is over and we need to turn this page of the book and look into the future. Another factor that gives rise to optimism is that our neighbours also share our opinion. There are no disagreements between us in relation to the further development of the region and the implementation of integration projects. I can say that I had numerous conversations on this issue with the leaders of Turkey, Russia and Iran. There were also consultations and contacts at the level of foreign ministers and deputy prime ministers. In fact, we are completely unanimous that it is necessary to take this opportunity. Because the post-war period really opens up new opportunities, creates unique opportunities for cooperation, mutual trade,

opening communications and creating new transport corridors. If we look at the Zangazur corridor alone, we can see that it meets the interests of not only Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran and Armenia, but also of other neighbouring countries. So a new transport artery of Eurasia may be opened. If these positive trends prevail, then, of course, each completed project will lead to a new project. I can give you an example from our activities in the energy sector. When we were taking the first step, we could not have imagined what large projects we would be implementing today. Look what the first oil pipeline led to – the Baku-Supsa pipeline commissioned in 1999 connected Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea with the Black Sea. So many projects have been implemented since then. Investments, new discoveries and the Southern Gas Corridor. In issues related to the implementation of this project, seven countries have already joined efforts, which in itself creates a new format of cooperation today. We can observe the same picture here. But on the condition that there will be no hidden things and thoughts – only sincerity, mutual trust and distribution of interests. Because the interests of all countries must be secured. Only then can we make the most of this situation. I want to say again that Azerbaijan, Turkey, Russia, Iran – my meetings and exchange of views with the heads of state allow me the opportunity to say that we stick to the same position. Armenia adheres to this position only in word because it puts forward some thoughts during consultations that cannot be accepted. Therefore, if Armenia takes the same approach to this issue, then, of course, it can also become an integral part of the ongoing processes. If not, then we will resolve the planned issues without it. No one can stop us. Recent history also showed that we have achieved all our goals. Armenia may simply waste this historic chance again, just as it did in 1990s. It did not believe that we would implement all the projects, that they would bypass Armenia, which would not receive a dime of profit. If it sticks to the same opinion, then it will face the same fate. We are ready for cooperation and believe that it can become the main guarantor of long-term peace in the region.

**JiJi News Agency (Japan):** *Hello, dear Mr. President. First of all, thank you very much. We also express our condolences again. Our question is related to Khojaly. Thirty years ago, many people lost their loved ones there. At present, the return of Azerbaijanis there is on the agenda. However, the people who survived there say, "Yes, we want to return there, but we do not want to see Armenians there". In your opinion, is it possible for Armenians and Azerbaijanis to live there together? What measures are you taking in this regard? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** I have already answered this question to a certain extent. I think it is possible. In fact, the policy of Azerbaijan, its position and the opinions of our people confirm this. We are a country open to cooperation, and representatives of different peoples have lived in Azerbaijan like one family for centuries. There have never been any conflicts, misunderstandings on religious or ethnic grounds in Azerbaijan. The second Karabakh war has shown this again. In other words, representatives of all peoples rallied into a single fist under one banner, and each people living in Azerbaijan made their valuable contribution to this Victory.

As for living together with the Armenians in the future, I want to say again that this is happening in various countries, including Azerbaijan. I was informed recently that our journalists even found a sister of a former minister of defence of Armenia who lives in Azerbaijan. Have a look, the Armenian defence minister took part in the genocide of the Azerbaijanis in the 1990s but his own sister lives in Azerbaijan. Is she facing any problems? Not. This is the upbringing, the moral level of the Azerbaijani people. We are ready for this in the future.

I am absolutely sure that the Azerbaijanis should and will return to the lands that are under the control of the peacekeeping mission today. This is indicated in the statement signed on 10 November. Yes, it will take some time and require joint effort. However, this is inevitable. We will also return to Khojaly.

There is no other option. The Armenian side must also understand that if it tries to create artificial obstacles, it will only harm itself.

At the same time, I understand the question you asked perfectly well. The wounds of the war have not yet healed. Khojaly's wounds will never heal. We will never forget the Khojaly genocide – both the relatives of the victims and the entire Azerbaijani people. It takes time to heal the wounds of war. We understand this and do not want to rush anyone. We do not want to force anyone.

For us, the first stage is the return of our citizens to the liberated lands. Parallel to this – I have already answered these questions – there are issues of building a lasting peace and minimizing the risks of war. Less than four months after the war, contacts are already being established between officials, officials of Armenia and Azerbaijan, meetings are being held, sometimes in an open form, sometimes in an unofficial format. However, this process is under way and it is moving in a positive direction. Therefore, realizing all the delicacy of the issue, I want to say again that in order to fully achieve what we want, we must be wise and take all steps in a timely manner. Just like in the second Karabakh war, the steps taken in good time had an effect.

**Independent newspaper (UK):** *Twenty-nine years have passed since the Khojaly. Azerbaijan has won the war. What is Azerbaijan's goal in connection with Karabakh after 29 years? Do you think foreign soldiers will continue to be observers in the region? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** We have achieved our goal. Our goal was to restore our territorial integrity. We achieved this and won a military victory. We have liberated our lands not through negotiations or discussions, but by military means. We have restored justice by fighting, shedding blood and giving martyrs. We did not leave the blood of our martyrs unavenged. We took revenge on the enemy on the battlefield.

As for foreign soldiers, their mission on the territory of Azerbaijan is temporary. These soldiers have a special mission. This cannot be perceived as a military base. Russian peacekeeping forces are carrying out a peacekeeping mission here, and I think they are doing it successfully. There are occasional problems sometimes, but on the whole, the activities of the Russian peacekeeping forces can be considered satisfactory. Their activity term here is intended to be five years. If Azerbaijan expresses a different opinion on this issue after five years, then, of course, their activities will be completed. At the same time, I have already expressed my opinion on this matter, the launch of the Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Centre is also a very important step. This is an important factor for maintaining stability in our region. I must also say that not very accurate assumptions are made about the activities of the Russian peacekeeping mission in the world sometimes, including Azerbaijan. Their presence on the territory of Azerbaijan today will play a positive role in the return of the Azerbaijani population to the liberated lands. This is testified by the sending of an Armenian sabotage group to liberated lands. Therefore, I have a positive opinion of their activities. I am sure that their activities will be continued. But the deployment of any other foreign forces on the territory of Azerbaijan is not a subject of discussion.

**RBC TV channel (Russia):** *Hello and greetings, Mr. President. I will have a question about people and, of course, about Karabakh. If we look at the map we have been seeing after the signing of the trilateral statement, we can see that the lands that are conditionally controlled by the Armenian forces are almost completely surrounded by the territories that now belong to Azerbaijan under this agreement. And there is a narrow path, the Lachin corridor, through which, relatively speaking, the Armenians of Karabakh can get to Khankandi, or, as they call it, Stepanakert, and so on. When will the*

*presence of Russian peacekeepers on the territory of Karabakh end one day? And how do you think the passage through this corridor will take place then? Will people's registration be checked in their passports? What will the passage of the Karabakh Armenians look like? In general and in principle, how are you going to integrate these people into your country and build relationships with them?*

*For example, you recently visited a church in Shusha. There may be a situation when some Karabakh Armenians will also want to come to pray in this church. I am asking about such life day-to-day issues. This is not the first time we have talked to people on the streets in Azerbaijan. They say, of course, that they are happy with the victory in the conflict this time. But they say that they are not completely satisfied. They still ask questions about Khankandi and other cities. Do you have any further plans? How will relationships be built in the future? They need to be built somehow. Thank you very much.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. As for the situation that exists now, you have described it very accurately. Azerbaijan has returned a significant part of its territory by military and peaceful means. Our main goal today is the restoration of these territories, the return of former refugees and the provision of normal life there. Everything must be done in stages, depending on the situation and depending on the strategic plans. We were moving towards the liberation of our territories for many years. Speaking of the negotiations, the negotiations I happened to be involved in, there were various periods in this process of negotiations, there were times when there were hopes and it seemed that we had got very close to agreeing the basic principles.

There is a lot of speculation in Armenia today as to what was proposed and how – both in the government and in the opposition. In order, as they say, not to add fuel to the fire of Armenia's political life, I will refrain from my comments. The only thing I can say is that the principle of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity has never been questioned throughout the process of negotiations. This was a matter of principle I have always stressed to the Armenian leaders I negotiated with and to the OSCE Minsk Group. The return of Azerbaijanis to all the territories was my principled position. And why were the negotiations going on? Because the Armenian side agreed with this. This is all. They agreed to this. The two previous presidents agreed. As for the current leader, I will refrain from any comments for now. As they say, everything is fresh in the memory. Why didn't this happen? Because they lied, because they said one thing and did another. As soon as we approach a glimmer of hope, they immediately staged a provocation. This has happened too many times. In the early 2000s and in 2014. As soon as some windows of opportunity appeared, a military provocation followed immediately. A good example of that was a helicopter that attacked our positions and was shot down. From this, they concluded that Azerbaijan had attacked them, although it was a military helicopter. It was not a training or transport helicopter. It was Mi-24. After that, the negotiations stopped. Then a new stage. Then came the period of 2016, the April war. The former president of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, is saying today that they won that war. A very interesting victory considering that we reached their trenches. We raised our flag, removed theirs and expelled them from the territory of Aghdara, Jabrayil and Fuzuli districts, returning to Boyuk Marjanli. This is how we lost, right? Great! Such is Armenian historiography, such is mythological Armenian science, including historical science, first of all. So we gave them a mouthful in 2016. I will put it that way. After that, we were given promises. Speaking of that, I will also say the following. We were given promises that they would get out of all our territories. These promises were made personally by Sargsyan at a meeting in Russia. He asked for two weeks to get out of these territories after the April defeat. Then why did he dismiss Ohanyan, who recently fled from Shusha at the last moment, from the post of defence minister? He went to Shusha to defend it. So why didn't he? After all, he was born there, on our land. Why didn't he defend it? Why did he run away? He is boasting of something incomprehensible in rallies now. So did Sargsyan dismiss him from his post for the military "victory" in April 2016? Specific dates were

provided to us. He asked for two weeks. That was in the presence of President Putin and myself. Two weeks later – whether he organized it himself or something happened there with the seizure of a police station. Then he said that he could no longer do that, because the situation had worsened, that there were terrorists there and that he needed to deal with the terrorists. So he dragged things on and on until 2018. This was why nothing was decided.

Now that we have resolved all this ourselves, as they say, I want to say again that we have a clear position on the future. We must think about the future today. And speaking of integration today, we are ready for any form of integration. Not many people live in the part where Russian peacekeepers are located now. In general, I should also tell you, so that there are no different figures as to how many people used to live there before the war. There were a maximum of 60,000 people there. We didn't take this figure out of nowhere. We are using objective control data, including Azerbaijani satellites and objective observation. Everyone understands that the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh has always been and remains the number one issue for us. A state like Azerbaijan – how could we not take operational intelligence measures to know what is happening there? We knew and know what is happening there now. We knew everything during the war and before the war. And this helped us a lot during the war, of course. It is still helping us now. Therefore, when Russian peacekeepers incomprehensibly allow for a secret passage of foreigners to Nagorno-Karabakh, we are puzzled. We have agreed with the Russian side that foreigners can go there only with our permission. But this agreement is being violated. I won't say more than that for now. I may have to comment on this topic again, but this is a fact. The reason I am talking about this is that we practically know the names of people coming and going there. Therefore, having such opportunities today, we are watching everything and will continue to do that.

In terms of integration, we are ready to continue to offer various options. For example, I know that water resources management issues are being discussed now. Why weren't they addressed all these years? Why did they, having occupied our territories, cut off our water from the Sarsang reservoir? They opened it in the winter, creating floods, and closed it in the summer so that our villagers could not irrigate their lands. Today, when we returned the Sugovushan reservoir, the situation is completely different. They are asking us now. Therefore, there will be many questions here, issues related to energy security.

In general, the integration of Khankandi and other territories where the Armenian population now lives is an inevitable process. One must understand this, understand the historical perspective. By the way, I spoke about this even before the war. Because if the Armenian leadership had made a sober assessment of the balance of forces – military, political, economic and demographic – it would have made the right decision. Our strength will only increase, including the population. Meanwhile, Armenia will continue to weaken without cooperation. There simply cannot be any other objective option here. There are simply no resources for restoration without cooperation with Azerbaijan and Turkey. They will continue to live in the sack, as they have done. But this sack is not a sack any more, it is a small pouch, I would say. And this is all. Therefore, they need to understand that they cannot say that they have some kind of a state called "artsakh". There is no such state. It has never been there and never will be. They should throw these crazy ideas aside and live normally as citizens of Azerbaijan. We see them as citizens of Azerbaijan who have been brainwashed. The war criminals who are trying to come to power in Yerevan again have brainwashed them. They do not live there themselves. During the war, they didn't sit there either, they ran away. Sargsyan, Kocharyan and Ohanyan. Where are their heroic medals they glued to their chests as child killers and murderers of Khojaly? Why didn't they defend? They were born there after all. One in Shusha and the other two in Khankandi. They should have defended. Or let them go there now, let them try to stick their

nose in there. Let's see if they can even make it out of there. So it is necessary to treat these people, you know, to treat these innocent people who have become victims of Azerbaijanophobia, this propaganda against the Azerbaijanis. I think that time is the best healer. These are not my words. Many people have pronounced them. And it is necessary to allow some time for the wounds to heal, for understanding to come, and for Armenia to understand that all the attempts to demonize Azerbaijan, which they used to undertake and are still undertaking, are counterproductive for them in the first place.

As for religious sites, we protect all religious sites. The state protects and restores them. During the war, we opened a Christian church in the village of Nij in Gabala district after restoration. As for the Christian sites – religious and cultural – on the territory that has been liberated, no-one should have any doubts that they will be adequately protected. In fact, Armenian pilgrims can freely visit the ancient Albanian temple of Khudavang, which is located in Kalbajar district. We are creating conditions – both the Udi community of Azerbaijan, which owns this temple, and the Armenians who tried to armenianize it are visiting the temple. So there will be no problems with that in the future. I am sure of that.

**Iraqi Media Network:** *Mr. President, I express my deep gratitude to you for inviting us to participate in events organized in the territories liberated from occupation. Visiting the city of Aghdam liberated from occupation yesterday, we witnessed unprecedented destruction. It turned out that during the occupation, all houses were looted, including the bricks. It was also very painful for us to learn that during the occupation the destroyed mosque was used as a barn for animals. As far as we know, mosques, mausoleums, cemeteries and, in general, cultural sites belonging to the Azerbaijani people were completely destroyed in other territories occupied by Armenia. What specific claims in this regard does your government intend to bring against Armenia in the international legal field? At the same time, this is the largest-scale destruction of Islamic heritage and cultural sites in modern history. This can be compared to ISIS crimes against cultures in occupied lands. As far as I know, this fact was recently confirmed by representatives of ICESCO. In your opinion, what specific role can international organizations and Muslim countries play in the restoration of cultural sites in the liberated territories? Moreover, what common role can international organizations and Muslim countries play in rebuilding these territories? Thank you very much, Mr. President.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. Indeed, the sight of the city of Aghdam causes pain for all of us, and the whole world should see that. Keeping pigs and cows in the Aghdam mosque is Armenia's insult of the entire Muslim world. This is how we perceive it. Those who committed these insults are trying to find a place for themselves in the political arena of Armenia today. There are photographs of former Armenian president Kocharyan in front of the destroyed Aghdam mosque, with obscene words written on its walls. They committed this crime, and I have repeatedly noted at various events, in particular, summits of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other international events, that those who committed this crime and allowed themselves to offend Islamic shrines can never be friends with Muslim countries. Addressing the leaders of Muslim countries, I said: the people you shake hands with have destroyed and desecrated Muslim mosques, kept cows and pigs there. There is a new video footage after the liberation of Zangilan from occupation. It also appeared during the war. Pigs were kept in one of the mosques in Zangilan district. They transformed Panah Ali Khan's palace into a stable. So they did it on purpose. Shouldn't animals be kept elsewhere? They did it on purpose. See how great their hatred of Muslims is! And the criminals who committed this, these immoral people then meet with leaders of some Muslim countries and talk about some kind of friendship and cooperation. Therefore, I request that these videos be circulated all over the world. Let the whole

world see that the leadership of Armenia is notorious for its Islamophobic nature. This is an insult not only to us, but also to the entire Muslim world.

According to reports, there were 67 mosques in the liberated lands, of which only one relatively survived. The rest are either completely or partly destroyed. We will restore all the mosques. Of course, representatives of Muslim countries are making their proposals on this issue. Recently, as you noted, an ICESCO delegation was in Azerbaijan. It visited the Aghdam mosque, after which, during a meeting with the Secretary General of ICESCO, it was suggested that ICESCO play a role in the restoration of our historical sites. We welcome this. We also welcome the initiatives of representatives of other Muslim countries. We must turn this restoration work into a celebration of Muslim solidarity, because Azerbaijan is pursuing a very consistent policy to strengthen Muslim solidarity. Various events held in our country through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as our open position on fundamental issues, have earned us great authority in the Muslim world, of course. We all need unity and solidarity among Muslim countries. Therefore, I express my gratitude for such a proposal and ask you to familiarize the public of your countries with these realities.

**Anadolu Agency (Turkey):** *Dear Mr. President, after 10 November, the three countries that signed the statement had to do certain work in the region, which they have started doing. However, during this period, various reports appeared in the press about the number of foreign countries in the region, control over transport planes that started arriving in the region immediately after that, the number of Armenian citizens returning to the region. Some issues became part of your agenda too. You have previously expressed your comments on this matter. As the leader of a country that has won the war, are you satisfied with the period after 10 November and could it have been better?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** In principle, I am satisfied, because one of the main issues specified in the statement of 10 November was the return of Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachin districts to us, and we have achieved this. On 1 December, these districts were returned to us.

At the same time, I believe that positive steps are being taken in relation to other issues mentioned in the statement. Certain issues, of course, have not been fulfilled yet. This requires a certain amount of time. However, I think that the issue, in principle, is developing in a positive direction.

The Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Centre is also an important step in this direction. I am sure that this monitoring centre will make a great contribution to strengthening stability and ceasefire in the region. As President of Azerbaijan, I want to note that no aggressive steps will be taken from the Azerbaijani side. We have never done this, and there is no need for that today. Therefore, in principle, the statement of 10 November is being implemented.

There are issues that are not reflected in the statement of 10 November, but they were agreed in the subsequent period. Some of these issues are being implemented, some are not yet. I repeat that there are some questions – Russian peacekeeping forces are not taking serious enough steps to prevent foreign citizens from entering our territory. This worries us, and we bring this concern to the Russian side. I am sure that these issues will also be regulated over time.

We should not forget that a completely new situation has shaped in our region and throughout the world after 10 November. We must adapt to this situation, every country must get used to it. This is a new situation, both for us and for neighbouring countries. There are logistical, technical, transport and psychological problems here. Some have too high expectations. But everything has its time and place. We were able to achieve our goal step by step and turned the impossible into reality in 44

days. Not only we, but also international experts are saying this today. The military operation we have carried out is being studied in military schools of leading countries of the world today. I believe that during the war and after it, we achieved the maximum possible result, but life goes on, it does not stand still, and new questions arise.

We have a strategic outlook: what we want, what we wanted until now and what we want in the future, and what we must do to achieve these desires and goals – we have clear views and ideas. Within the framework of this general plan, we will continue to take our steps. There will be new achievements and successes.

**1 + 1 TV channel (Ukraine):** *Good afternoon, Mr. President. I have two questions. One is quite short. Could you please describe in a nutshell the current nature of military and military-technical cooperation between Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Is there an opportunity for Azerbaijan to share the military experience of de-occupation with Ukraine? And then the second question. Despite all the differences in the nature of the wars in Ukraine and Azerbaijan, Ukraine resists Russian aggression, we have a lot in common. For example, the need to solve the problem of reintegration of the local population, which, to put it mildly, is not particularly friendly to the legitimate government. You are faced with this problem and we have to resolve it too. Here is the question: what are your plans in the short and long term regarding the Armenian population of Karabakh. In other words, what can you offer the Armenians of Karabakh - citizenship, full reintegration, cultural autonomy, etc.? Thank you very much.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. As for military-technical cooperation between Ukraine and Azerbaijan, this cooperation has a long history. In the first years of independence, Ukraine was our main partner in terms of military-technical cooperation. Gradually, this cooperation somewhat declined though. To be honest, it is not measured in very large volumes now. However, with regard to the formation of our military industry, when we began to create the military industry, Ukrainian enterprises helped us a lot in this, and many of our military production facilities were joint ventures with Ukrainian companies.

Today, as far as I know, the military-technical complex of Ukraine is going through a period of development, and so does Azerbaijan's. Therefore, I believe that there are also opportunities for cooperation in this direction. But I will say frankly that there are no specific projects or proposals either from the Ukrainian or from the Azerbaijani side so far. Perhaps the time is not yet ripe for this.

As for the reintegration of the local population, to be honest, we haven't started it yet because the war has just ended. Today, the Armenian population living in the territory of Karabakh has no contacts with the Azerbaijani population. But this is due to the fact that the Azerbaijani population is simply not there, it was not there for 30 years and hasn't returned there yet. Also, the Armenian population is in the territory controlled by the Russian peacekeeping mission and does not go beyond that because there is nowhere to go – there are minefields everywhere. Therefore, for such everyday contacts between the Armenian and Azerbaijani populations to start, the situation must be ripe. First of all, I am talking about political conditions. As I said, the Armenian state should abandon any attempts to sever the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, it should abandon any phraseology like "artsakh is an independent state". They should simply give up all this heresy and nonsense, stop deceiving themselves, stop trying to deceive the whole world and confusing people living there. They should recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. I think this is inevitable. I mentioned in an answer to an earlier question about a possible peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia – I understand that I am going a little further than it is perhaps necessary today – but it will also be possible when Armenia recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, which is recognized by the entire world.



Therefore, I think that the contacts already being established at the level of officials now – a working group with the participation of deputy prime ministers, a meeting of the heads of the border services of Azerbaijan and Armenia at the border, a meeting of the heads of intelligence agencies of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow and other contacts between government officials – must create the groundwork. Again, it is important for the Armenian side to understand that there is no need to try to deceive us. Unfortunately, we are seeing these tricks again, if I may say so: one thing is said in word, but something different happens. This is not necessary, it is not the right time, and they are clearly not in the position to afford it now. We must work sincerely if we agree on something, we must fulfil it, if not, if they can't, they must say that they can't, so that there are no such unjustified hopes and promises.

So when this foundation is created, if it is created at all, and when the Azerbaijani population returns to the liberated territories, then, of course, there will be contacts. Because they are simply inevitable for the normal functioning and for the life of people living in Khankandi and other settlements now. It is simply impossible to achieve this without Azerbaijan. Notice how cargoes are delivered to the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Karabakh now. How? Not by plane to Yerevan and then by trucks to Khankandi, as was the case before. Now they are delivered by rail to Barda. Quite soon, in one year, we will have a road to Aghdam. Russian trucks can already approach from there, get loaded and drive. Much cheaper and more convenient. How do Russian planes carrying cargo for military personnel fly now? They don't fly to Yerevan to then drive along this corridor, especially covered with snow, for 10 hours. They fly to Ganja, and from there they can reach Khankandi in an hour, perhaps in a little more than hour. In other words, it is life that dictates this. When the Russian side addressed us with this request, we supported it because why should we create artificial problems for the peacekeepers. After all, the peacekeepers provide security for our residents as well. Secondly, by doing this, we are also sending a message to those who live there now that it is no coincidence that the Caucasian Bureau decided to leave Nagorno-Karabakh – I want to emphasize this again and dispel yet another Armenian lie, like many others – not to transfer Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, but to leave it there. This is the fundamental point they always manipulate with. Firstly, because this is a historical region of Azerbaijan, and secondly, how would they get there? Indeed, there were no roads in Lachin and Kalbajar until the 1930s. Those who don't know this should. They rode horses there. How could people get there from Armenia? There was no way. Only on horseback. There were no roads at all in Kalbajar. It was a cut off region. We started building roads there in the 1930s. Of course, there were settlements there, there was civilization, there were ancient cities. The road to Khankandi passed through Aghdam. This is why. So everything should return to its natural state, completely depoliticized. I think that the people of Armenian origin living there will understand this, and when they communicate with their Azerbaijani neighbours and former friends, I think they will quickly find a common language.

**REAL TV channel (Azerbaijan):** *Mr. President, in the territories of Azerbaijan, which Armenia held under occupation for 30 years, great damage was caused to the historical and cultural heritage of our people, mosques, historical sites and infrastructure were destroyed. We can say that the territory has actually been turned into a desert. This vandalism continued even after the 10 November statement. They were given a few days to leave the territory, but even during that time they committed atrocities and caused huge damage to Azerbaijan. What is being done to give this a political and legal assessment at the international level and how would you assess the prospects for holding Armenia accountable for the crimes committed? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. You are absolutely right. After 10 November, they did not give up their unsightly activities. On the contrary, for 20 days they tried to inflict maximum damage on our nature and property. Houses were burned and plundered, trees were cut down, window frames

and sanitary facilities were taken away. And this happened right before the eyes of the whole world. It is good that representatives of foreign media also witnessed this vandalism, the whole world saw with whom we were facing and what evil we had defeated. To be honest, I did not expect such vandalism. In fact, it was completely unjustified. Have a look, they occupied someone else's lands, used force to expel the owner of this land and these homes without giving them any time – we gave them 20 days, although they didn't give us even 20 hours. After that they lived in our houses and said that these are their houses and when they were forced to leave it, they destroyed, demolished and burned these houses. What a degree of immorality! The whole world saw this. The significance of the second Karabakh war is not limited to the restoration of our territories and territorial integrity alone. The whole world saw the true face of Armenian fascism. Of course, we must and we will count all the damage caused. On my instructions, relevant agencies of Azerbaijan are currently conducting video, photographic and drone filming. All damage caused will be calculated. Work has begun on recording all destroyed houses so that citizens could apply to international courts individually, first of all, to Azerbaijani and then to international courts to seek compensation for the damage caused.

At the second stage – work has already begun in this area and relevant documents have been signed – documents have been signed with international companies that have experience in calculating the damage caused in similar conflicts. They will come to Azerbaijan in the near future. Of course, they will conduct the research themselves, but we will provide them with the necessary materials. These international companies have experience in this area and, of course, claims will be filed with international courts to compensate for the damage caused, for compensation to be paid.

At the same time, foreign companies that exploited our natural resources without our permission will be held accountable. As you know, our gold mines on the liberated lands were exploited. This is an international crime. Preliminary work has already been carried out to bring some of the organizations that have committed this crime to justice. I have already expressed my opinion on this issue several times, I want to say again: either these companies will pay us compensation or they will go to court. If we go to court, then, I am absolutely sure that they will lose and, at the same time, disgrace themselves in the eyes of the whole world. Because it is a crime to engage in illegal business activities in a foreign country and to plunder the natural resources of this country. The international reputation of these companies will also be seriously undermined.

At the same time, our forest fund was destroyed, the Armenians cut down and destroyed 54,000 hectares of forests. Before the occupation, the total area of our forests was approximately 220,000-230,000 hectares, of which 54,000 hectares were cut down. They produced various materials from wood, and as far as I know, the parquet business had also gained a wide scope there. Foreign companies also participated in this. So all the damage caused will be calculated. Also, the companies that illegally used our land will be fined. On the liberated lands, there were about 100,000 hectares of area under grain alone. They illegally exploited them and received an income. This will be calculated too. This is one side of the matter. How will international courts react to this is another question. Of course, the main issue here is objectivity. If there is an objective approach, then, of course, they will have to pay this compensation. We have also got acquainted with international practices. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been instructed, and I was informed the other day what precedents there are, so these precedents exist. Not many but there are. Of course, we must analyze every precedent. Is it based on objectivity or political order? Because it is no secret that the international judicial system is not free from political pressure either and in some cases fulfills political orders. Therefore, everything will depend on this. In any case, we are fulfilling our mission and a detailed report will be prepared in the near future.

**Reuters news agency (UK):** *Mr. President, you have just talked about investments, about investing in the restoration of Karabakh. I would like to ask if there are sufficient guarantees for a lasting peace in Karabakh to attract foreign investors and creditors to restore it? In general, what volumes are we talking about? As far as I know, 2.2 billion manats has been allocated from the budget this year. This is a small amount, given that there is a lot of restoration to be done. Will private investment also be attracted? How does Baku see this process as a whole?*

*I would like to ask one more question. By your decree, the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan has been transferred to the Investment Holding and its corporatization is under way. Does this mean that Baku is going to open a number of large state-owned companies of the country for privatization? Can we assume that this is a message to foreign investors? In your opening remarks, you noted very well that a visit of foreign journalists was organized to a number of territories that have been liberated from occupation. Your administration has carried out this work very professionally, at a high level. But my colleagues will probably support me that we would all very much like to visit the city of Shusha, to see what state it is in now, how much it was destroyed, what work is going on and how this city lives now. I would venture to ask your help in organizing such a visit. Thank you very much, Mr. President.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. As for foreign investors, I think that foreign investors will invest more actively in Azerbaijan, given that the war is over. Everyone understands that the risks of a resumption of hostilities are practically reduced to zero. As for Azerbaijan, there will be no aggressive actions on our part. As far as Armenia is concerned, they simply have no opportunities to do that. I think that the suicide I mentioned and quoted is not the best way out even in their situation. Therefore, I am sure that there will be investments.

I must tell you that even before the war we managed to attract investments in renewable energy. Two large international companies have expressed a desire to invest in the construction of solar and wind power plants with a total volume of 440 megawatts. A tender was held among the world's leading energy companies and two companies gave the best offers. But then I said that this does not mean that other companies, which, as it were, have not achieved success, should remain on the sidelines. Therefore, we are now attracting companies that would like to invest in this area. Indeed, there are very good opportunities for this in the liberated territories. Kalbajar-Lachin is a wind zone, because there are very strong winds. Zangilan-Jabrayil is a solar zone because the amount of sunshine is very large every year. Besides, the quality of sunshine is also conducive, so to speak. So instructions have already been given to relevant Azerbaijani agencies to work out these issues together with foreign partners. So this has great prospects. Plus, as I said, we have declared Karabakh a zone of "green energy" and, of course, we are waiting for investors.

As for state investments in the amount of 2.2 billion manats, I think this amount is acceptable for a start. Moreover, I will say that from the investment program on the restoration of Karabakh that was submitted to me, from the projects that will be implemented this year, the amount of somewhere in the region of one billion has already been practically distributed. What does this mean? It means that there are no projects yet. Because these are infrastructure projects and we allocate funds for them. These are electricity, roads, railways, demining, etc. As for the construction itself, we have not allocated funds for that yet, because there are no such projects. We want to plan everything correctly in order to avoid the mistakes made in urban planning even in the city of Baku at the beginning of the construction boom, in other cities where construction proceeded in a chaotic and uncontrolled manner, often according to some shady schemes. This should not happen in the Karabakh zone, and not only in there. And then this experience will be transferred to all other territories of Azerbaijan. Therefore, everything must be properly planned. Where things should be

located, what infrastructure projects should be carried out – so that everything goes according to plan. Of course, the state will take over the entire infrastructure sector and plus a large part of the housing stock. But private companies will also be able to make investments there in accordance with agreed projects, in compliance with all the norms of urban planning and environment. This is how we see the approach.

As for the villages, hundreds of villages have been liberated in the freed territories. Some villages, which had five, six or seven houses in the past, should probably not be a priority.

Therefore, we are defining priorities now – which villages should be rebuilt in the first place and what needs to be done for this. Also, a survey is being conducted or is beginning to be conducted among former refugees on my instruction, so that we clearly know who is going to go. You see, I am also sure that everyone would want to go, and may God bless this. But someone may not want to go. Therefore, why should we spend money if someone doesn't go or if they go there for the weekend but will live in Baku or Sumgayit? Is this a way out of the situation? Not! We need to place those who will live there, and to do this we need to conduct a survey. And not just ask people and then forget everything. People will have to sign a statement that I, such and such, am going to go to such and such district, such and such village, and live there. For that, we will address financial and all other issues. Otherwise, I do not want to predict, but I know what may happen. In fact, let me tell you more – the liberated lands are not summer cottages for those who live in Baku. This will not happen - that's for sure. We will exercise rigorous control over who lives there in general, so that those who want to go there could do that, and we will create all the conditions for them.

As for the Investment Holding, I will not speak for a long time, I think everyone knows why it was created, as it was clearly stated in my decree. First of all, in order to improve the management system. The management system in state-owned companies is lame. It does not meet modern requirements. It is a deterrent. It is a method of sucking money out of the budget. Almost no state-owned companies, perhaps with a few exceptions, can support themselves. Subsidies from the budget are required all the time. This is not good enough. Therefore, this can no longer be continued. On the other hand, the strategic infrastructure at this stage, especially taking into account the restoration of Karabakh, should remain in the hands of the state. This is unambiguous, otherwise we will simply be unable to restore the territories. Because if we assume that all our state-owned companies operate by the method of corporate governance of private western companies, then they simply will not invest in the restoration of territories. Therefore, the goal at this stage is to bring the corporate governance of state-owned companies into line with international standards and to ensure proper controls. For this, supervisory boards are being set up. The supervisory boards include representatives of the Presidential Administration, representatives of ministries, the government, so that there is no longer any lack of control or waste. Because state-owned companies today are in many ways a huge burden for the state. Even the State Oil Company, is the largest taxpayer, takes money or, was until recently, taking money from the budget for gasification. What is that good for? I am not even talking about others. With a few exceptions, our state-owned companies are ineffective. This will end – both in terms of strengthening management and improving governance. Whoever cannot or does not want to work in a new way, honestly and transparently, will be held to account, and not only administrative.

As for the privatization of state-owned companies, this will definitely not happen this year in any case. But some spheres of activity of state-owned companies, of course, should, among other things, develop at the expense of private capital. First of all, I mean the energy sector. We have already opened this sphere for foreign private capital and are opening it for Azerbaijan. I said that these

are wind and solar stations. We have a great potential for hydropower in the Lachin-Kalbajar zone. Why can't Azerbaijani companies give an offer to participate in these projects? There are not large investments required, these hydroelectric power plants are quite small in volume. This will be a good step, we will test how it works, how it integrates into our overall energy system, so that these companies work with a profit and the state is less burdened. So this is the situation now.

As for the trip to Shusha, I will give an instructions for journalists to go. There were difficulties with access because there was practically no road. Even when I was driving there – I was just lucky that the weather was sunny and dry, otherwise I myself would have stayed half way too. Therefore, I am ordering Hikmet Hajiyev – by the way, there have been appeals in this regard – to arrange this visit in the near future.

**TV channel CBC Azerbaijan:** *Mr. President, for many years Azerbaijan sought to draw the attention of the world to the occupation of its territory and the plundering of its material and spiritual heritage. At the same time, Baku has repeatedly called on international organizations to take effective steps to resolve the conflict. But we all witnessed the domination of indifference and double standards, and as a result, Azerbaijan restored its territorial integrity on its own. In your opinion, has Azerbaijan's example broken the stereotypes that had existed regarding the settlement of frozen conflicts in other parts of the world?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** I believe it has to a large extent. We have created a new reality because there are frozen conflicts in many places in the world, not only in the post-Soviet space. If you look at these conflicts and analyze their origins and current state, you can see that both people of these countries and the international community seem to have reconciled to a certain extent, agreed with the current situation or perceive it as an uncontested option. There is a certain logic in that because the situation of neither war nor peace which lasts for years inevitably lead to such thoughts. This is the first thing. Secondly, several factors are required to break stereotypes. If these factors and their unity exist, then these stereotypes will be broken. First of all, a strong political will is necessary: a strong political will of leaders and their ability to withstand any pressure. I believe that this is a paramount issue because, referring to my own experience, I can say that over the course of 17 years, at various periods, attempts to put pressure on me have intensified and weakened, but they have always been there, always. I mentioned this earlier: there is a reality and we must accept it, be content with what is being offered to us, the rest of the lands should remain with them, Armenia does not agree, a referendum must be held there, a vote must be held there and so on. The public is aware of that now.

Leading countries of the world were or are the mediators in our conflict. To say no to permanent members of the Security Council, to these countries, to take steps that run counter to their will is not easy, of course. Therefore, first of all, there has to be a strong political will. Secondly, a lot depends on the position of the people. If people have come to terms with this situation, then the conflict will remain frozen. The Azerbaijani people never put up with this situation and, addressing the Azerbaijani people, I always said that we will never accept this. Some wondered why Ilham Aliyev raises the Karabakh issue everywhere. I raised this issue even at international events that are not related to this topic. I may have repeated the same words a thousand times to reach out to these people. This is the first thing. Secondly, I wanted this never to be forgotten here, inside the country. Never! The internally displaced persons should not have a feeling of hopelessness. At the same time, let our society never forget this topic. I believe that keeping this topic on the agenda is one of the important issues, especially if we consider – I am now saying everything as it is – the fact that the real situation suggested that the solution of this issue by military means could cost us very dearly. Even

if we have all the possibilities, the consequences, as they say, may be very bitter. Thirdly, a powerful army is necessary, of course. No conflict can be resolved without that. And you have to be right. We had all the primary factors. We were right from a historical point of view, because these are our lands, from the point of view of international law and resolutions of international organizations. All this strengthened our position. But why did we lose these lands in the early 1990s? Because there was no leadership, there was no army. Here in Baku, thousands of people took to the street in 1992, while our positions remained empty. At that time, the Popular Front began a civil war, captured Azerbaijani soldiers and then our lands were under occupation. There was a struggle for power. So we could not rally in the interests of national unity, a single idea at that time, but we have done that now. Besides, a generation had to grow up. I have already spoken about this many times. The biggest role in the liberation of Karabakh was played by our citizens who have matured over the past 17 years. Of course, the older generation deserves a lot of credit. They have experience and knowledge but it was our sons brought up in a patriotic spirit over the past 17 years who went into battle and stood up to defend the Motherland. They gave their lives for their homeland. If these factors are present, any conflict can be resolved. Of course, there are other factors, economic development, etc. But if these factors do not exist, no frozen conflict can be resolved.

We have created a new reality, and everyone must put up with and reckon with it today. A new period begins for us. The post-war period has been difficult for many countries. Several months have passed since our war, but we are seeing that the post-war period in our country has been very quiet. This is a huge advantage of our society and greatness of our people. Today we are joining forces again in the name of these ideas, in the name of new ideas – how to restore Karabakh, how to return the former IDPs to these lands and then create a powerful state no-one can ever commit any provocations against us.

**Haber Global TV channel (Turkey):** *Mr. President, first of all, thank you very much for receiving us on such an important day. We honour the memory of our martyrs and congratulate you on the victory in Karabakh. These issues have already been raised to some extent. First, to what extent will Turkey be involved in the process of restoration of Karabakh at the current stage? My second question is as follows: as you know, at present, cooperation between the two fraternal countries continues. At what stages will this cooperation continue, both in the defence industry and in the field of reconstruction and construction?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. I can say that Turkish companies are already taking part in our projects. Turkish companies are involved in the construction of the Fuzuli-Shusha highway, which is strategically important for us. At the same time, Turkish companies are involved in work on the road being built from Goygol District to Kalbajar. This road runs through difficult terrain and involves the construction of tunnels. Preliminary agreements have already been reached.

As you know, Turkish companies were active in Azerbaijan before too. Turkish companies have the biggest share of participation in the projects being implemented on behalf of the state. I don't remember the exact numbers, but Turkish companies participated in various construction projects in Azerbaijan – in Baku and many other regions – with a total value of over \$10 billion.

Of course, Turkish companies were the first to sign the contracts. The scope of work to be carried out is very large. I have repeatedly discussed this with my dear brother, the distinguished President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. We will do all this work together, and there will be new opportunities for the activities of Turkish companies, especially if you consider that Turkish companies have a wealth of experience in construction and infrastructure work, as well as other areas, including reconstruction.

As for the defence industry, the whole world became convinced of the quality of the Turkish defence industry during the war. This is not a secret to anyone. Azerbaijan skillfully used Turkish defence systems, which provided us with a great advantage in the war. Our contacts continue after the war as well. As a matter of fact, new contracts have already been signed. An agreement was reached on the supply of the most modern types of Turkish weapons to Azerbaijan. New contracts have been signed and this will greatly enhance our military power. As you know, joint Turkish-Azerbaijani military exercises are held on a regular basis. Last year there were fewer of them due to the pandemic, but in 2019 they were held more than 10 times, and this year they have already been held in Kars. Work will be carried out in this area as well.

We would like to see Turkish companies involved in many areas in the liberated lands. And I am sure that we will see that – in the construction, reconstruction, infrastructure and restoration of our historical sites. Because there is a lot of work to be done. Even after that, Inshallah, we will go together.

**Middle East Eye media group (UK):** *Hello Mr. President. I have two questions. First, how much money do you think will be spent on the restoration of the liberated territories in Karabakh? In other words, has it been calculated how many billions of dollars will be spent? And the second question: there is information in the international media that you are a mediator in the normalization of relations between Turkey and Israel. What can you say about this?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Our investment plan for this year provides for 2.2 billion manats. As I have already noted, about half of this amount has been distributed and half remains unallocated. It is very difficult to calculate this because it depends on the amount of work to be done. We have just come to these lands. A complete analysis has not yet been carried out. After this analysis, of course, more accurate figures will emerge. But it is beyond any doubt that this will require several billion dollars. Just imagine that we are building three airports. We started building hundreds of kilometres of railways. Possibly thousands of kilometres of highways will be laid – both between cities and between villages. All villages will have asphalt roads. By the end of the year, projects related to electricity will be implemented in all our regions. Then come drinking water projects and related work, agricultural work, and then so much construction work needs to be done to take one million people back there. Schools, hospitals, sports centres, culture centres. It is very difficult to calculate. Therefore, we have allocated a certain budget for each year. The budget of 2.2 billion manats is not the final figure. If we see that this is not enough for this year, we will add. Because today we have nothing more important than the restoration of Karabakh. Major infrastructure projects have already been implemented. The country is not implementing very serious construction projects. Therefore, all our efforts are focused there.

Of course, private investment should also take an important place among the work to be done. If private organizations take on renewable energy, then, of course, the burden on the state will be less. In any case, quality, time and, of course, rational use of costs are important here.

As for mediation, Azerbaijan is known as a country providing cooperation in the region. We have no problems with any country. This is why we were unanimously elected to the Non-Aligned Movement as 119 out of 120 countries voted for us – although there are countries in the Non-Aligned Movement that do not get along with each other and there are serious differences between them. But each of them supported Azerbaijan. Because we have a very sincere policy. We intend to establish effective cooperation with all countries, and we are doing this. Therefore, Azerbaijan is recognized as a meeting place in the world. For example, it is no coincidence that meetings between the military

leaders of NATO and Russia were held in Baku before the war, before COVID. The chief of the Russian General Staff and the head of the NATO Armed Forces met in Baku. Why did they meet in Baku and not elsewhere? Because there is confidence. We have already earned this reputation. There is confidence, there is trust and there is respect. They know that our word is as powerful as our signature.

Other important events are taking place. After the war, Azerbaijan has been making effort to bring together some of the countries between which there are disagreements. Why are we doing this? We want stability, peace, no enmity and less risks. We are living in this region. There are no threats or sources of risk inside Azerbaijan. They did not exist before the war, they do not exist now either. What could give us a headache? Certain tension outside our borders can cause us both political and economic problems. What should be done to fix that? We need to try to reconcile countries. You know, emotions may prevail, especially in some cases. Sometimes a word spoken is misunderstood or misinterpreted. So we have to clear our table of all these emotional issues and get to the bottom of things. What is the essence? For example, there are some serious disagreements between two countries. If there are, let's try to resolve them. If there are none, then the activities of a country like Azerbaijan may be appropriate. I can't say more than that. You probably also understand why. But I believe that if there is friendship between our friends, it will be better for us and for our friends.

**“Yeni Şafak” newspaper (Turkey):** *Dear Mr. President, we thank you for your patience and answers to all our questions. First of all, speaking on behalf of Turkey, we share in the sorrow of the Azerbaijani people, the fraternal people, but at the same time we share in the pride of Victory. I have one question. In connection with the joint activities with the Turkish Armed Forces, you announced from the first day that joint activities would be carried out to ensure monitoring in Karabakh. The joint centre has been established. Russian and Turkish soldiers are operating there. We also see joint activities in demining areas. Besides, what other joint activities of the Azerbaijani and Turkish armies are there? Are joint activities or more involvement of Turkish soldiers in eliminating threats possible in the coming period in the event of any shortcomings? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. Cooperation between the Turkish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan has a long history. The Armed Forces of Turkey and Azerbaijan have been together at all times. Answering one of the questions, I said that in 2019 alone, both Baku and Turkey held more than 10 joint military exercises. This year, too, the first exercise has already been held.

The establishment of a joint centre means the arrival of the Turkish Armed Forces in the Karabakh region, in Azerbaijan. This, I think, can be considered a historic event. This makes us very happy. I must note that the establishment of the Turkish-Russian joint monitoring centre is a common decision of the three countries. Armenia just had to agree to this because when the statement of 10 November was signed, Armenia was not in a position to object to that. Armenia, as they say, had no time for that. If there was a different political and military situation, then Armenia would object. But it could not object, and we said that this centre was being created on the territory of Azerbaijan, so what does Armenia have to do with it?

Therefore, I think that the establishment of this centre can be seen as a historic event. In addition, as you noted and I mentioned as well, a large delegation of more than 100 people came from Turkey to start mine clearance work and provide training courses. This activity continues.

After that, our cooperation will continue in various fields, in the military field. I said during the war and everyone knows that the Turkish army is one of the strongest armies in the world, the second



most powerful army in NATO. We intend to create a small model of the Turkish Army in Azerbaijan. Specific work in this direction has already begun.

During the war, we gained new experience because our army had almost not participated in wars. We simply approached this area from a theoretical point of view, so to speak. War is a great experience. We must draw the right conclusions from this experience. We have achieved great success. At the same time, there were certain drawbacks during the war. We do not hide that either. The decisions I made during the war as the Commander-in-Chief, including the decisions related to the military composition, indicate that certain problems were identified, but we solved them.

There is a very broad legal framework between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Many documents and agreements have been signed. Among them are documents reflecting issues of mutual military assistance.

From the first days of the war, my dear brother, dear President made statements that Azerbaijan is not alone and that Turkey stands by Azerbaijan. This became a message for many: stay away, do not interfere, do not hamper Azerbaijan. The Minister of Defence of Turkey, distinguished Hulusi Akar, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, distinguished Mevlut Cavusoglu, and other high-ranking officials unequivocally supported Azerbaijan. This has become great political and moral support for us. At the same time, it was a signal to the whole world to stay away and not interfere.

This continues to this day. Turkey and Azerbaijan are two fraternal countries, the closest countries to each other on a global scale. Our military cooperation is growing stronger by the day. Work is under way to purchase new weapons in Turkey. I have already informed you about this and these weapons will be delivered shortly. Our army must become even stronger and more modern. The model of the Turkish Armed Forces is the most acceptable one for us. From now on, we will work together in this direction.

**“Sözcü” newspaper (Turkey):** *Thank you, Mr. President Ilham Aliyev, for giving me the opportunity to ask the last question. Mr. President, first of all, the Turkish people felt a sense of great pride over the victory you won. It was with great pleasure that we watched your victorious speech. My question is this: how will you react if Turkey opens the border with Armenia after the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** We once again express our gratitude to the Turkish state for all its support. At the same time, the closure of the borders was undoubtedly a symbol of brotherhood, a fraternal step. Turkey closed its borders with Armenia in 1993 after the occupation of Kalbajar. Before that, the borders between Turkey and Armenia were open. Turkey was one of the first countries to officially recognize Armenia. From the first days of Armenia's independence, Turkey intended to establish normal relations with Armenia. Unfortunately, the anti-Turkish propaganda in Armenia was extremely strong, and it continues to this day. Turkophobia has become the official ideology there. They have always seen Turkey and Azerbaijan as enemies. The closing of the borders at that time was an act of solidarity with Azerbaijan. The conflict is now over. Now Azerbaijan has restored its territorial integrity and, of course, a new situation has arisen in the region. But at the same time, Armenia's claims against Turkey are still valid. Notice what the President of Armenia said before the war. He said that the Treaty of Sevres should be revised. In other words, this is a territorial claim to Turkey. The constitution of Armenia contains territorial claims to Turkey. They have to give it up. They are waging a dirty campaign against Turkey all over the world. They are seeking recognition of the so-called “genocide” in the parliaments of various countries. How long can such a hostile

policy last? They, as it is said, must come to their senses. To put forward territorial claims to such a large country like Turkey is suicidal, it is stupidity.

Of course, given the new situation, we also have a positive attitude towards the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations. Currently, we do not have a special opinion on the normalization of these relations. Turkey will determine itself when these borders can be opened and when relations can be normalized. In any case, from the Azerbaijani side, as they say, there will be no negative attitude because I believe that the relations between all countries must be normal in the interests of stability in the region and long-term peace. Notice what we are talking about now. We are talking about the opening of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. So if the Armenian-Azerbaijani border is open, then, of course, there is no need for the Turkish-Armenian border to remain closed. If we are talking about these corridors and if we want to implement the Zangazur corridor, then, of course, the Turkish-Armenian border will also open. Of course, this is the decision of Turkey itself. If you ask me about this, Azerbaijan does not have any special position on this issue. In addition, what benefits Turkey will benefit us as well.

## **Letter dated 1 March 2021 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden H.E. Ms. Ann Linde**

I am writing to draw your attention to destabilizing actions and statements of Armenia, which undermine the realization of the trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on November 10, 2020 and put the fragile process of normalization at risk.

The trilateral statement announced an end to all military activities between Armenia and Azerbaijan accompanied by series of humanitarian and economic measures. This document, which was further complemented by another trilateral statement of January 11, 2021 put an end to three-decade-old conflict creating conditions for normalization of inter-state relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and for sustainable peace, security and economic development in the region and beyond.

Following the end of the conflict, Azerbaijan has embarked on wide-range post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration plans to eliminate consequence of military occupation of its territories, which will pave the way for safe and dignified return of hundreds of thousands displaced population into their homes and secure peaceful co-existence. Azerbaijan is resolute to reintegrate its citizens of Armenian origin into its political, economic and social space on the basis of the Constitution of Azerbaijan guaranteeing equal rights and freedoms for all citizens of Azerbaijan regardless of their ethnic or religious background.

Against this background, continued attempts by Armenia to deploy its armed forces into the territory of Azerbaijan, along with its other destabilizing actions and provocative revisionist statements derail the implementation of the trilateral statements.

According to credible information available to the Azerbaijani side, which is validated by reports of independent mass media sources (the link is given below), the members of armed forces of Armenia are transferred to the territory of Azerbaijan through the "Lachin corridor" in civilian trucks wearing civilian dress, including under disguise of construction cargo, in an attempt to escape control procedures of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. It is also evident from the report, which is not the only one in this respect that deployment of Armenian soldiers to the territory of Azerbaijan causes anger of the parents and relatives of the military personnel, who reject to serve in the territory of another state. Moreover, Armenian servicemen and their relatives voice serious allegations of human rights abuses, in particular torture and other inhumane treatment of the personnel deployed into the territories of Azerbaijan.

This is a gross violation of Armenia's obligations under international law and seriously contravenes to that country's commitments under the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020. The trilateral statement envisages the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the territory of Azerbaijan concurrently to the deployment of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, under the trilateral statement "Lachin corridor" was established to facilitate the movement of civilians, trucks and cargo exclusively for the humanitarian purposes. Such a misuse of the corridor for military purposes undermines peace efforts and demonstrates the true intentions of Armenia.

It should be recalled that it was the illegal transfer of Armenian conscripts into the territory of Azerbaijan in late November last year that eventually led to a serious military tension. Thus, the sabotage group of 62 Armenian servicemen committed series of attacks on the Azerbaijani military and civilians causing casualties and injuries, before being detained in the result of anti-terror

operation. The group is currently under investigation by the relevant authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

To avoid further re-occurrence of these incidents, Armenia must stop sending its conscripts into the territory of Azerbaijan. In this regard, it should be noted that deployment of armed personnel into the territory of Azerbaijan, while being in itself a gross violation of the sending State of its obligations under international law, also entails individual criminal liability under the national legislation. Azerbaijan is determined to continue to take all necessary measures stemming from its rights under international law, as well as requirements of its national legislation.

Transfer of Armenian military personnel to the territory of Azerbaijan, which is reportedly being organized against their will, is also a blatant violation of human rights of the servicemen as reflected in international human rights law. By forcing its servicemen to engage into military activity in the territory of another state not necessitated with legitimate national defence and putting their safety into danger, Armenia also violates its commitments stemming from numerous documents adopted by regional organizations, such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to which it is a member.

Clearly destructive stance by Armenia with regard to tackling serious threats emanating from massive contamination of recently liberated territories of Azerbaijan with mines and other explosive devices and refusal to release information regarding the minefields in these territories also deserve particular attention.

The mines and other explosive devices pose a serious threat to life and safety of Azerbaijani military and civilians in the post-conflict period. Since the signing of the trilateral statement, 18 citizen of Azerbaijan, including 12 civilian have been killed, 71 citizens, including 9 civilian have been seriously wounded as a result of mine explosions in the recently liberated territories.

Massive mine contamination of the liberated territories also seriously impedes the realization of wide-ranging rehabilitation and reconstruction plans of the Government of Azerbaijan. Most importantly, it affects the realization of inalienable right of the hundreds of thousands of IDPs to return to their homes in safety and dignity.

Therefore, the release of information by Armenia on the location of minefields is an absolute necessity so as to avoid further loss of innocent lives, to move forward towards a speedy post conflict reconstruction and thereby help a lasting peace. Armenia's consistent disregard to our repeated appeals seriously questions that country's sincerity for normalization of relations, represent serious violation customary international humanitarian law constituting a war crime.

While being of strong belief that establishment of good-neighbourly relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of mutual recognition of and respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of international borders has no alternative for healing up the wounds of the war and ensuring security and well-being for the peoples of the region, Azerbaijan counts on support and assistance of all its international partners to realize the vision of peace, security and cooperation reflected in the above-referred trilateral statements.

In light of the above-mentioned, I appeal to you with an urgent request to take all measures at your disposal to persuade Armenia to live up to its obligations under international law, the trilateral statement, as well as customary international law to stop deploying its armed forces into the

territory of Azerbaijan, abandon revisionist claims and cease all actions and statements that impede realization of the trilateral statement.

Link to the video report referred to in the letter:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?fbclid=IwARInPAg24sn9D-SnlzVPWxvdPX3aPTJJlInzUizxepmlhJbz2gfDuHpiLiw&v=x3zg-T5u4rk&feature=voutu.be>

## Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**April 4, 2021**

Today marks the annual International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Actions. On this occasion, Azerbaijan reiterates its grave concern with the serious threat emanating from the massive mine contamination of its recently liberated territories by Armenia and the subsequent refusal of the Government of Armenia to share the location of these mines in order to make the region safe.

Azerbaijan is faced with major mine contamination of its recently liberated territories, which represents a serious threat to the life, safety, and livelihoods of both military and civilians in the post-conflict period. During almost three decades of occupation of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan, Armenia deliberately laid mines in these territories, as a result of which there had been numerous casualties among the Azerbaijani military and civilians. With a view to inflicting as much damage as possible, as well as creating additional obstacles for civilians returning to their homes, Armenia also deliberately planted mines on a massive scale during its forced withdrawal following the counter-offensive operation of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan.

Armenia, in a blatant violation of its international obligations, now refuses to release information on the location of minefields. This is a severe breach of international humanitarian law.

Since the signing of the Trilateral Statement by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia on November 10, 2020, which announced an end to all military activities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, 20 citizens of Azerbaijan, including 14 civilians have been killed as a result of mine explosions in the recently liberated territories. 85 citizens, including 16 civilians have been seriously injured, including the brave employees of the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) attempting to protect others.

The massive mine contamination of these territories also seriously impedes the realization of rehabilitation and reconstruction plans that the Government of Azerbaijan has embarked on. Most importantly, it affects the realization of the inalienable right of the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons to return to their homes in safety and dignity. Families forced from their homes for nearly thirty years still cannot safely return until these mines are cleared.

Armenia's deliberate policy of planting mines during the period of illegal occupation, and during its forced withdrawal from these lands, clearly demonstrates the intention to deny access of the hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis ethnically cleansed by Armenia to their homelands, to hamper the realization of fundamental rights of these people, and inflict as much unnecessary human suffering as possible. Armenia's conduct continues to impede the realization of the vision of peace, security, and cooperation in the region.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly called for the international community to voice their concern at the human cost of Armenia's landmines. Azerbaijan reiterates its appeal on Mine Awareness Day and calls on the international community not to turn a blind eye to Armenia's violations of its international obligations, including its deliberate policy of planting mines, impeding the return of internally displaced persons to their homelands, and refusing to release information on the location of landmines.

We urge Armenia to uphold its international legal obligations and its moral duty to protect human life. Azerbaijan will take all available and necessary legal measures to ensure peace and uphold accountability.

## Excerpts from the remarks by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the International Conference “New vision for South Caucasus: Post-conflict development and cooperation” held at ADA University

April 13, 2021



**President Ilham Aliyev:** First of all, I would like to express gratitude to ADA University, and to Rector Mr. Pashayev for organizing such an event. I am glad that ADA University within the relatively short period of time became one of the leading universities in Azerbaijan and has a very broad international connections. Also, I'm very grateful to the participants of the conference for their participation, because as you can imagine the situation after war is very fragile. Though the ceasefire is being maintained still there are a lot of questions about post-conflict development and the topic of the conference is post-conflict development and cooperation. Therefore, once again, thank you to all the participants for your attendance. We consider this as not only a sign of interest to what is happening here in the region but also as a sign of your solidarity with the people of Azerbaijan who suffered from Armenian occupation for 30 years. Before talking about post-conflict development we need to understand that our lands were under occupation for 30 years and we cannot exclude our memory, the memory of those who lost their family members, the member of those who were deprived from the fundamental right to live on their own lands.

We cannot forget the atrocities committed by Armenian army. We cannot and will never forget Khojaly genocide and the innocent victims of Khojaly genocide organized by the leaders of Armenia and the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh regime. Therefore, it's very important to understand that this memory will be with us. We will keep it in our heart. At the same time, we need to look to the future. Also, the destructions on the territories which we liberated are beyond all our worst expectations. Because we more or less knew what Armenians have done to our cities and villages. Because there have been from time to time some video footages some information from some international representatives who managed to visit those lands.

Probably you know that foreigners who were illegally visiting then Nagorno-Karabakh were deprived of visiting the territories which you have visited. They were deprived of going to Aghdam, to Fuzuli, to other territories which surrounded the former Nagorno-Karabakh administrative district. Because Armenian government didn't want foreigners to see the devastation and to see their hatred to Azerbaijanis, because it's clear that those destructions and devastations were done after the first Karabakh war stopped. Because it's not possible to destroy the cities and villages during the war.

They did it deliberately in order to erase the legacy of Azerbaijani culture in order to erase these territories from our memories, in order to change the origin of those lands. Therefore, we need to understand the feelings of Azerbaijani people and now when we returned to those lands and we see with our own eyes what the occupation of Armenian forces did to our historical monuments, religious monuments, to our cities and villages. Of course, this is a very important factor in order to understand our steps with respect to post-conflict situation. You are all very well aware of what happened. You were involved in this process you know. So, there's no need for me to make a long speech talking about 30 years of occupation. Probably I will conclude now in order to have more time for discussions. So, thank you once again for being with us.

### **Q & A session**

**Mr. Matthew Bryza, Senior fellow at the Atlantic Council (USA), former Co-chair of the Minsk Group:** *Thank you Mr. President. It's an honour to be with you. Very-very nice to see you in this new world. I want to pick up on where you just left off-about the mindsets both in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The fact that this decisive victory that Azerbaijan won through combination of innovative technologies, and tactics, but also incredible bravery. I don't think people understand that you conducted the war in a restrained way. The collateral damage, or civilian casualties were at the minimum. You showed strategic vision by pausing after you won the military phase of war in Shusha. Consistently the war aims that were articulated, were also consistent with years of negotiations and preliminary agreement back in 2009, and the so-called basic principles. I mean that November 9-10 agreement is essentially the basic principles, except there is no possibility in the change of Nagorno-Karabakh's legal status, because Armenia didn't accept throughout the war that solution and then lost the war. So, my question is, is there any sense in Armenia, do you feel it at all that there is an appreciation that the way the war was conducted was actually quite restrained and then should create an opening for some sort of over time a reconciliation? And the second question is I'm supposed to ask, if you might be willing to take a group photo with us later?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Yes, sure, of course. Thank you very much, thank you for your comments. You are a person who was directly involved in the negotiation process. Therefore, you know what was our position and you know what was Armenian position. The Azerbaijani position was always constructive, because as I said many times, during our meetings with your former colleagues, ambassadors of the Minsk Group from France and Russia that Azerbaijan always was interested in finding soonest solution to the conflict because we were the suffering side.

I had a strong feeling during negotiations and I shared it with you that Armenia doesn't want a solution. They say they want but they do everything in order not to have this solution. What we have seen after we liberated the territories, those fortifications, those huge hundred millions of dollars investments in mining, in building this defence lines.



We clearly understand that they were doing it in order to keep these lands under occupation forever. So, their tactics was actually to be in the process of negotiations, I mean the previous governments, to have kind of a process, to imitate, to negotiate, to agree on something, to disagree on other things. But when it comes to make a decisive step, to step back, as it was in France, in Rambouillet, as it was in 2009 after Armenian side actually rejected the formula of settlement which provided the liberation of the surrounding territories of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan and leaving the so-called status for future negotiations. Therefore, this is how it works. So, you know it very well. With respect to our behaviour during the war from the very beginning it was very clear that Azerbaijan is conducting not only the war of 21st century but the war of new morality if I may say so. When war started my immediate commands to our military servicemen was to behave with dignity, to behave in a moderate way, and to do maximum in order not to do damage civilians. And the fact that there have been less than 40 victims on Armenian side among civilians clearly demonstrated. Because we were liberating territories.

Some territories were illegally inhabited. Therefore, our attacks, our technical capability was aimed only on military objects. And those less than 40 victims which Armenian side had most of those people were participating in the military operations. They were civilians who were recruited to the military units and they were part of military operations. The way how we treated those who were left behind also is a clear demonstration of the human nature of our policy and human behaviour of our army. There have been several elderly people left behind for instance in the province of Hadrut. And when our soldiers came, they saw these people. They were frightened. The elderly people, they spoke very good Azerbaijani, because they lived together with Azerbaijanis, and they were taken to the hospital. They were treated in our hospitals. Then, when we decided and the Red Cross was involved to return them back, Armenians refused to receive them. One of the elderly who was in poor health condition, they refused to receive him, because they said that they do not want to take care of him. So, we, together with the Red Cross put him to the hospital in Azerbaijan. And with respect to the question "do they in Armenia appreciate our behaviour", I would say "no". And this is a very unfortunate development of events, because if we are talking now about post-conflict situation, we need to concentrate on some elements which can lead to future reconciliation. But there have been such a long period of deliberate policy of demonization of Azerbaijan, inventing stories, presenting Azerbaijanis as enemies as those who occupied Armenia or occupied Karabakh. So, it probably takes time for the society to understand and not only during the war, but even after war what we have done. We returned more than 1500 dead bodies of Armenian soldiers. We are still participating together with the Russian peacekeepers in these searching operations. And I can tell you that in the first Karabakh war we had almost 4000 missing Azerbaijani soldiers. None of them was returned. None of them. So, this is a difference. We provide easy transportation, logistical support to Russian peacekeeping forces through our railroad. They bring the goods by the railroad to Barda. It is much easier and cheaper rather than to fly to Yerevan and then go 5 hours or 6 hours by Lachin corridor. And many other elements I can bring. We allowed Russian Gazprom to transport natural gas to Armenia through Azerbaijani territory because of the repair work on Russian territory. We could have said no, but we said yes. This is another sign, another gesture. We allow Armenians to use 21 kilometres of our road in Zangilan and Gubadli districts which is a road situated on Azerbaijani territory but was used by Armenians and we allow. We did not block it. Did they allow us to move one meter to the territories which were occupied during the war? No. So, these are all unilateral steps and it's not only a gesture. It's a deliberate policy of turning the page of the war. I said, despite of what I said in the introductory comment that we will never forget, at the same time, we need to look to the future. I think here we expect more activity from civil society of Armenia. Because neither government, nor opposition today will not even afford them to say any even not a positive and neutral word about Azerbaijan, because it's

a concept of Azerbaijanophobia. It's decades of cultivation of hatred against Azerbaijanis now actually deprive them of their right. But I think they should find courage and they should start telling truth to Armenian people, because the war is already in the history, the conflict is resolved and we need to look to the future.

**Dr. Laurence Broers (Caucasus programme director, Conciliation Resources, UK):** *Mr. President, in the late 1990s there was a view in Azerbaijan that civil society and NGOs could come in and work with populations to build confidence once the conflict was solved. I wanted to pick up on where you left off there by asking you what is your thinking now given what you have said that the conflict is resolved. What should be the roles of civil society and peacebuilding in this new vision for the region? Thank you.*

**President İlham Aliyev:** I think that they can play a crucial role especially with respect to what I said about my expectations from the political segment of Armenian society. Therefore, it's a big room for civil society to make steps with respect to reconciliation. But I can tell you probably you know that even those very few representatives of Armenian civil society who speak for peace with Azerbaijan are becoming a subject of attacks and public attacks and sometimes physical attacks. They are announced as traitors. Armenian politicians call them Turks. In their political slang it is probably very insulting word and they are being frightened by politicians. We made steps of building bridges between our civil society members even during the conflict as there have been two delegations visiting Armenia, Karabakh and coming to Baku. But after the second trip of representatives of civil society, journalists and some members of parliament, Armenian side stopped it. And when I asked then former Armenian President Sargsyan why they stopped it, there was no answer. Then we found out that they were afraid that there could be some rapprochement, there could be some elements of cooperation. They were always blocking that. But now, I don't think that they are in this position but we need to be able to deliver our messages to Armenian society. Our resources are very limited. The public space in Armenia is strongly controlled by the government. As I said any positive sign or word about Azerbaijan is considered to be a treason. Therefore, I think that international organizations, especially those who have experience in dealing with this kind of issues of post-conflict reconciliation or normalization, confidence-building measures, I think we should count a lot on the support from international NGOs. Azerbaijan is ready to work with them on this issue.

**Dr. Carlo Frappi (University of Venice, Italy):** *Thanks Mr. President. It's an honour being here. My question revolves around a need for reconstruction again and how Azerbaijan's partners maybe helpful in that and particularly on Italian-Azerbaijani relations. 2020 was a watershed in our relations. This is not only because of the inauguration of the Southern Gas Corridor finally. But I would say it's the result of a wider engagement especially as a result of the state visit last February in Italy which can be seen as a watershed. Declaration or joint declaration on multi-dimensional strategic partnership was signed whereby I would highlight this. Italy for the first time made an open commitment to Azerbaijani territorial integrity. So, somehow, even without the departure from previous policy of equal distance. And also somehow kind of departure from what our European friends were doing and are still doing. So, this kind of commitment was symbolically reiterated also in the aftermath of the war. I remember this very high profile visit to the liberated territories by high profile Italian delegation and on that occasion Mr. President you said that you expressed Azerbaijani determination to closely work with Italy on this reconstruction process. So, my question is what is currently the state of the art and especially what we may expect in the coming future and how Italy can be helpful not only in the reconstruction process but also in this need for reconciliation. Thank you so much.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you very much. I fully agree with what you said about our bilateral partnership.

Italy is a very close friend and partner for us. I still remember my state visit to Italy last February. As you know, before that President of Italy Mr. Mattarella paid a state visit to Azerbaijan and my visit was also a continuation of our strategic dialogue. We signed a document on strategic partnership. By the way, it was the second. We already signed one, it was signed several years ago. So, this really demonstrates our mutual commitment. And also, as you correctly mentioned we are very grateful to Italy for their straightforward, just approach with respect to the resolution of the conflict, which we know that was not easy to articulate, especially in the European Union family, where there are very strong, powerful Armenian supporters who always tried to put on the same scale the victim of occupation and the occupational forces. So, that was really very important sign of cooperation.

Also I can tell you that we have already signed documents on strategic partnership with nine EU member states. I think some of them were also encouraged by what we have done with Italy. So, our political relations are excellent. We continue strong cooperation and this cooperation was already tested during the conflict and in post war period. And as you correctly mentioned, the visit of Italian delegation to the liberated territories is considered by us as another sign of support. I can tell you that from the very first days of our plans for reconstruction we invited Italian companies. We invited them through Italian Embassy. Here by the way, the Ambassador who already terminated his duties was very active in promoting Italian interests and Italian business and he is a very good friend of Azerbaijan. So, we approached Italian embassy in order to give us some recommendations with respect to Italian companies. We had previous contacts, because Italian companies implemented big projects here, in petrochemicals, refinery, construction, and architectural projects. They already started and we want to expand the presence of Italian companies. As I said, after war we will invite the companies from friendly countries. And this is natural, because the period of war was a kind of clear indicator for us who is who. Of course, we had some assumptions. We more or less could predict what will be the position of this country or that country. But to say 100 percent we are not sure. But the war made everything clear. Among the areas where Italian companies already have been invited, I can tell you maybe one of the most important, we invited Italian companies to participate in the project of different museums and war memorials, because we will have museums of victory and war memorials not only in Baku, but also in other cities liberated. So, this is one area. Another area where we invited Italian companies already, is power generation. The contacts have already started and after war not only contacts, but also some preliminary documents have already been signed, because there is a huge potential of power generation on the liberated territories, particularly renewable water, sun and wind. Preliminary documents have already been signed. We count very much on using Italian experience in developing agriculture on the liberated territories, because it's a very good fertile soil on those areas and we can have maximum productivity. I can tell you that now at this moment among foreign companies we have only Turkish, Italian and British companies who already are working with the Azerbaijani counterparts. Of course, we are only now in the first stage of development. Though physical reconstruction have already started, infrastructure projects have already been launched. But there will be huge potential for the future. Of course, there will be more other companies from different countries. We want all our friends to be part of reconstruction, all our friends to benefit from this opportunities, because we as a nation and we as a government are very grateful. This is our nature. If someone does us something good, we will always keep it in our heart and will try to do everything to reciprocate. So, taking all that into account, our friendly relations, strong political ties, great experience of Italian companies and also our plans to restore our historical and religious sites and Italy is a world centre of culture.

That's my opinion I'm sure you will share it with me. Therefore, there will be huge and diversified opportunities for working together.

**Ms. Nigar Goksel (Turkey Project Director, International Crisis Group):** *Mr. President, yesterday we were in Aghdam and we saw the massive physical destruction but we were also able to imagine that the tragedy of the lives torn apart and sort of human cost. And I imagine besides reconstruction, when the local people of Aghdam returned to their homes it's going to take some time and effort for them to build trust with the Armenian villages nearby to be able to interact. So, I was wondering what kind of steps you expect from the Armenian side, also the Armenians in Karabakh to build that trust again so that they can live side by side without peacekeepers Inshallah one day. And also, in the bigger picture, I was wondering whether in the short or medium term you think it will be useful for Turkey to open its border with Armenia both for a regional integration and to address the demonization and the Turkophobia that we see so rampant in the society. Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. Of course, it is difficult to predict how Azerbaijanis and Armenians will interact in the future. I think to a large degree it will depend on the will and political wisdom of politicians, because I think we need to be more active here and in Yerevan in order to try to build bridges, of course, if Armenia wants that. We don't know what are their intentions. They never elaborated on that.

I already on several occasions made it very clear that we consider the page of the conflict turned down. We even can talk and I already said it a couple of times about a possible peace agreement with Armenia. These are our plans. But we do not have any messages of this kind from Armenian side. Armenian prime minister is silent, Armenian foreign minister is very aggressive and Armenia is not in the situation now to afford themselves to be aggressive against Azerbaijan. They should remember what happened during the war. Armenian opposition is now actually in hysteria. And Azerbaijanophobia, Turkophobia became one of the main, it always was very important but now, I think, it is the only factor. I am sure that they will build their election campaign on Azerbaijanophobia, Turkophobia on the feelings of revanchism. Therefore we cannot establish this interaction unilaterally. Our position is clear. We are ready for that. It will not be easy.

Those former refugees who will return to Aghdam and other territories they will see what Armenians have done to their lands, to the graves of their beloved ones, to their religious monuments. What will they feel? I can predict. I felt the same, when I was approaching the line of contact during the war, and was only able to see Aghdam through lenses from binoculars and when I went there, to all the occupied territories. Yes, I am a President and I must be in line with my duties, but we are all people, we have feelings, we can hide them, we can control them but sometimes it is very difficult. So, I can predict what will be the feelings of former Azerbaijani refugees but as a President, as a person who looks to the future we will do everything if Armenia has positive signals to us to try to build these connections. And what already have been done from our side unilaterally, I already mentioned, is a clear demonstration of that.

And believe me, we could have not allowed any of these things happen and nobody could have forced us. We did it deliberately. So, this is as far as the first question is concerned. With respect to the second question, we see some signs and some very low voices in Armenian establishment about reconsidering their policy, towards Turkey. Even during the conflict on several occasions I was talking about that saying that this is absolutely unacceptable and strange that such a small and impoverished and weak country as Armenia has territorial claims against such a great and powerful country as Turkey. They were so much under their ideological dogmas and this Turkophobia became

a national policy that they even lost the feeling of reality. And as far as I know, the Turkish government is planning their steps in a very constructive way. But of course, they need to have an adequate response. First, what Armenia should do? They should refrain from territorial claims against Turkey. They should rewrite their constitution. They should adopt a new constitution, they are planning to do it. But that's for political agenda of the government. The government wants to strengthen their political position. But at the same time, I think I can give them a good advice-to remove from their constitution territorial claims against Turkey. I don't know in which country's constitution there is a territorial claim against other country. I think it's a unique situation and everybody should understand that there have been wars and wars and wars throughout the history, and their fake history with respect to the so-called genocide has nothing to do with reality. It was war for situation when people were fighting with each other, countries were fighting with each other but then, there was a reconciliation. By the way, at that time, Armenia had difficulties not only with Ottoman Empire. They also had difficulties with other neighbours and why they only selected Turkey for their unjustified attacks. So, Turkish government on several occasions publicly offered creation of some joint groups of historians to look impartially, objectively to these issues. But they rejected. Why? Because they need this fake history in order to get political dividends. They were exploiting this fake story in order to get protection, to get now some assistance from some countries. So, that's my position. At the same time, what I can add, of course, I cannot speak on behalf of Turkey but what I can say is not a secret that as you know today we are discussing the unblocking of communications and particularly Zangazur corridor. Zangazur corridor cannot be unblocked without Turkey's agreement and their participation. Though, Turkey is not present in a trilateral working group on the level of deputy prime ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia but Turkey is informed by us about what we discuss. And if Armenia wants to put an end to difficulties with communications, if they want to have any opportunity to become a transit country it's only Turkey which can provide them with that. And as far as I know, Turkish government is ready. So, again the ball is on Armenian side. They need good doctors. I said many times, they are poisoned with poison. This poison mainly comes from their diaspora which sits in a very quiet and nice places in Southern France, in California, in Krasnodar Krai, in some other capitals and enjoy their life. And they want those Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh in former Nagorno-Karabakh and in Armenia to be their hostages and be their tools for them to pursue some ambitious and chauvinistic ideas. Armenian society needs to destroy the iron curtain if I can talk about these analogies. They are living in the iron curtain and they have been influenced by this poisonous ideas. We are ready to help them with that.

**Dr. Svante Cornell (Director of Institute for Security and Development Policy, Sweden):**

*Thank you very much dear Mr. President. First of all, let me congratulate you and the people of Azerbaijan on the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. It is clear that this historic achievement has changed the politics of the Caucasus region and far beyond. Most importantly I think it has shown to the world the capabilities of Azerbaijan and the resolve of the Azerbaijan statehood. It has proven that Azerbaijan is not an object of some real or imagined geopolitical games between great powers, but actually a power and an actor on its own right. And I would add that this is a trend we are seeing across the region with increasingly several states developing into real actors and such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan alongside with Azerbaijan. As this is becoming clear Mr. President, my question is how will this impact Azerbaijan's foreign policy, its relations with surrounding countries including regional powers but also the countries to the East, and Central Asia with whom you share many interests? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you very much, thank you for your comments and for your congratulations with respect to restoration of territorial integrity and you are absolutely right we demonstrated our capacity which I am absolutely sure was not known to many members

of international community. Actually, all these years we were doing our homework in a quiet atmosphere. It was not that we were hiding something. No. Everything what we have done, was done openly. But we were not trying to advocate for us, we were not trying to make presentations, to make some PR actions. We were doing what was right for the country, for the people, addressing a lot of social issues, resettling refugees [...] restore by force our territorial integrity if Armenia does not do it peacefully. So, war was a kind of a concentrated implementation of our capacity. And we never over-estimated ourselves. We never thought that Azerbaijan is a number one or number ten issue on the agenda of the leading countries. No, they have another issues and we are fine with that, because the less big powers remember or think about us the better for us. What will happen and what is happening now? With respect to the neighbouring countries, relations develop successfully. The war demonstrated once again-I don't want to go into much details-but basically we are satisfied with the behaviour or actions of our neighbours. Of course, we are very grateful to brotherly Turkey for the very strong political and moral support from the first until the last day of the war. But with respect to our three other neighbours, our main target was that they be neutral and it happened to a certain degree, in some countries to a large degree. But nevertheless, I don't want to go in much details, and after war situation also demonstrates that now our neighbours share our views with the regional development. By the way, we already discussed it with our neighbouring countries how the region should develop, what should be the projects of transportation, of logistics, energy cooperation, trade, etc. So, we don't have any division. It's true that Armenia did not yet publicly declare their policy, but what they do de facto I think is also satisfactory, I mean the government. With respect to our neighbours across the Caspian also relations were developing very successfully and with each of them we have a special track of cooperation. The biggest part is related to transportation, because Azerbaijan after completing all the transportation and logistical projects here like railroad connection with Turkey, sea port and highways became already an important transportation hub. Though we are landlocked but nevertheless we participate actively on East-West and South-North transportation corridors and now more countries are involved in these projects. So, main area of our cooperation with our neighbours across the Caspian is transportation, but not only. We are working very closely on how to increase the volume of mutual trade, how to provide better opportunities for mutual investments.

**Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Taimur Akram (Executive Director of Centre for Global and Strategic Studies, Pakistan):** *Thank you very much, Mr. President. On behalf of people of Pakistan and Pakistan, I would first like to congratulate you on this victory. The people of Pakistan are very proud of you and you have become a celebrity in Pakistan, because every day you are in newspapers in Pakistan. And now even in the international relations departments of various universities, big universities in Pakistan they are studying the Karabakh war and the success of Azerbaijan. In Pakistan we are very proud of you, and the Azerbaijani nation. So, coming over to my question sir, during the last 44-days war Azerbaijan was fighting only in its own territory. Precisely targeting the military positions and military equipment of Armenia in the occupied territories. But Azerbaijan was faced with the constant war crimes of Armenia. Armenia deliberately targeted densely populated areas and civilians of Azerbaijan in the 44 days of war. We remember the ballistic missile launch to Ganja, Tartar, Barda and other cities and recently from the media we saw that the remains of Iskander M ballistic missile which was found in Shusha, launched by Armenia. Before it was also mentioned by the Armenian prime minister that Armenia has launched Iskander M missile on Azerbaijan during the war. This ballistic missile is very dangerous and can carry a nuclear also. What is your opinion on it and what should be the actions of the international community on this action?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you for the congratulations. Thank you to Pakistan. I would like to ask you to convey my gratitude to the people of Pakistan for continuous support during the war and Pakistan was among the countries which openly supported Azerbaijan from the first days of the confrontation. Until the last days Pakistan was always on our side. We are very grateful to Pakistani government and Pakistani people for a very consistent approach to the issues related to our territorial integrity. Maybe many of our participants do not know but Pakistan is one of the very few countries which did not establish diplomatic relations with Armenia because of their aggression and occupation. There are only very few countries like Pakistan. So, we are always grateful for that and this is a real sign of our brotherhood. And probably you know that during the war there have been many flags of Turkey and Pakistan in our cities and we, of course, were telling who is supporting us. And that was coming from the hearts of the people.

With respect to the war crimes committed by Armenia, it's not for the first time. They committed war crimes during the first Karabakh war but at that time it was different information environment. And many facts of atrocities and barbarism were not documented or if documented they did not reach the international audience. Therefore, they managed to hide their war crimes. At that time it was not only Khojaly, but many other villages like the village Aghdaban in Kalbajar, not many people in the world know about that. But that was more or less the same. They were killing and burning innocent civilians and many other villages have been victims of Armenian barbarism. And during the second Karabakh war, as you said, it was in front of the eyes of international community how they bombed our cities and villages and not only with ballistic missiles, they were bombing with artillery and mortars every day. 16 thousand bombs were thrown on Tartar which is a small city. They even bombed the ceremony on the cemetery killing a family. They were bombing Barda, they were bombing Naftalan when they killed a family of five. They were deliberately attacking our cities and villages and they thought that they will stop us by doing that. We did not do the same, we never hit any village or any city. We hit only, yes, military objects which were in Khankandi, but we hit military objects. Using ballistic missiles on the sleeping city of Ganja was a clear indication of their barbarism, because that ballistic missile, it had a target. It was not by chance that it hit a residential compound. It was a targeted attack at night when people were sleeping, and not once, several times. What have they done after that? They said it was not them. Officially, Armenian officials said it was not Armenians who did it, but then who did it? Who? Ourselves? You probably know that they even wanted to put a blame for Khojaly genocide on Azerbaijan. They were inventing these stories and trying to persuade international community that Azerbaijanis themselves killed innocent victims in Khojaly and they did the same with respect to Tochka U and Elbrus missiles.

They even hit Khizi which is situated hundred kilometres from Baku. They wanted to reach Baku. They were attacking Gabala. Gabala is far away from the area of conflict. So, Barda, Aghdam, Aghjabadi, Fuzuli, Goranboy, Naftalan, Khizi, Gabala. That's what they were doing. There were no military installations. And, of course, the news about Iskander attack was a surprise for us. When Armenian prime minister said that they used Iskander but it exploded by only ten percent, everybody was laughing. Probably, he could not properly deliver the message which he wanted to say. And when I was asked in the end of February, I didn't say they didn't do it. I said we did not detect it. It is different things. At that time we did not detect it. But after he said that after former president Sargsyan said that they launched Iskander, but he was regretting that they did not launch Iskander on our pipelines. This war criminal Sargsyan whose hands are in blood of innocent victims of Khojaly was accusing Pashinyan that they did not hit the pipelines. Then former chief of staff of Armenian army Movsesyan, I don't remember his name, he said they used. Then we had a video footage how they launch Iskander missiles. I gave instructions to search and we found it. Why

we did not find it before. I don't know, because there was snow in Shusha. After war it started snowing and even when I was there in January, in February there was snow. So, after snow melted it was found. So, what happened after it was found, is very strange. There have been a comment of the Armenian army chief of staff. He said that he cannot comment on that. How should we understand it? Yes or no? Probably yes, because if it was no, he would have said "no, we didn't". If he said "I cannot comment", it means yes, they did it. There was a comment of former defence minister of Armenia, who said that he cannot tell it because it is a war secret. You see the level of this people. You know these people are the ones who were making decisions about military actions. Saying that it is a war secret means that yes, they did it. Unfortunately, we did not get any answer from Russia, because as you know Russian official representative of Ministry of Defence said 'no', when Pashinyan said that they used it. Well, Pashinyan is a prime minister of Armenia. He says we use it and Russian official from Ministry of Defense says "no they did not use it". So, what does that mean? Does that mean that Russian Defence Ministry controls the Ministry of Defence of Armenia? Is that the meaning of what Mr. Konashenkov said? So, when he said Armenia did not use it, all Iskander missiles are in the storage. How do they know? Do they control Armenian storage? If they control Armenian storage, then who is in the disposition of these missiles? Then, there was a statement of press secretary of Mr. Putin, Mr. Peskov. He said that Iskander was not used. Iskander is here, you can go and see. It's about 15 minutes. I saw it myself yesterday at the Military Trophies Park. It is not only Iskander. It is Iskander M, which Armenian army could have never had. I can tell you more, because we've been waiting for a long time. I can tell you more, because this is such a sensitive issue that I cannot hide it from Azerbaijani people. I raised this issue during my telephone conversation with Mr. Putin on 1 April. This was not part of the official disclosure of telephone conversation, because we gave the same disclosure of the conversation as they did. You can compare it. But I asked this question I said that we need to know the answer, the people of Azerbaijan need to know that answer, what happened. And it's almost two weeks. On April 4, our Defence Ministry wrote an official letter to Russian Defence Ministry with this respect providing them with photo, video and other materials, asking for response-what are these rockets, missiles and what happened? Already nine days have passed. There is no answer. A group of Azerbaijani journalists wrote an open letter to Russian Embassy in Baku. This letter is open. Probably you have seen it. No answer. Iskander is here, Iskander-M which was not supposed to be exported to anywhere. How did it get to Shusha? From where was it launched? Who launched it? We are waiting for answers. I can tell you one more thing that to some questions we already have answers. But we are waiting for official answers from Armenia, because these missiles were launched from the territory of Armenia. We know precisely from where and these questions must be answered. It's a serious issue. It's not just an ordinary missile. It was launched and how many of them were launched we also know, and when and from where. But we need, the Azerbaijani people need to have answers to these questions.

**Dr. Dennis Sammut (Director, LINKS, UK):** *Mr. President, thank you very much for being with us this morning and answering these questions so comprehensively. War is always a costly affair and the 44-day war has resulted in the death of thousands of people on both sides. Yet, we also know that as a result of this war hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs now have the prospects of going back home. That is certainly something that I think we can all celebrate. The war and the results of the war have opened a number of prospects for regional cooperation. Yet, as I think you hinted already in your presentation there are still some unresolved issues. I want to ask two questions. The first is, you have said many times that the Karabakh conflict is over now. Does that mean that Azerbaijan is renouncing the use of force to regain what is left of Nagorno-Karabakh under Armenian control? And the second question is related to the 10 November trilateral declaration. So, this declaration, we all agree, is of great importance and has the potential of changing the dynamic*



*in the South Caucasus. Yet, it remains a trilateral declaration. Does Azerbaijan consider the idea that this trilateral declaration be embedded in the United Nations Security Council resolution that would somehow give it global and international legitimacy and make sure that all the parties abide by its provisions?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you very much. I fully agree that declaration of 10 November is of great importance and actually though it's not a big declaration, it actually covers all the important elements and also shows that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is over. Frankly speaking, we did not think about any kind of international legitimization of this resolution. We were not approached by neither Russian nor Armenian side with that respect. So, that was not something which we considered. We thought that declaration is signed and Russian peacekeepers are there. Declaration is fully implemented. The most important is that it is being implemented. And most parts of this declaration are already implemented. With respect to UN Security Council resolutions we know what happened to those resolutions which were adopted in 1993. They have been on paper, and would have been on paper maybe for 30 more years if we did not do what was right on the battlefield. Therefore, what it will add to what we have. We have declaration. Azerbaijan is implementing all the items. Armenia was forced to implement items of declaration with respect to return of the remaining occupied territories and Russia is providing the peacekeeping services. With respect to use of force against the territory of Karabakh which is now inhabited by Armenians, no, we don't have such plans. I said Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is over. It was resolved. Those Armenians, who live now in the territory controlled by Russian peacekeepers, we consider them as our citizens. And what we've done so far with respect to our humanitarian assistance, logistical support, demonstrate these intentions. I can tell you even more. Today already there are contacts on the level of some experts with respect to the issues related to water management, because for many years, for thirty years we were deprived of the water of Tartar River because of the two water storages which were controlled by separatists. So, one of those water storages have been liberated and now we have full access to Tartar River water. Now, to a certain degree those who live under Russian peacekeeping control, need more water cooperation with us. So, it started. So, in this respect also Azerbaijan behaves constructively. But as I said, if Armenia would plan any kind of hostile operations against Azerbaijan, if we see and we can see now everything what we need in Armenia and everywhere-if we see that there is a one percent of the risk to Azerbaijani people or to our territorial integrity we will use all our means in order to protect ourselves. But we will never in the future initiate any kind of hostile operations if we are not provoked.

**Mr. George Gvimradze (Senior Scholar, Strategic Research Center, Georgia):** *Thank you Mr. President for your time for this meeting. I would like to express my appreciations to the organizers for inviting me here and to having this opportunity to give you a question. Let me move back to the regional cooperation. Soon after the war ended Mr. President Erdogan of Turkey visited Baku and he once again raised the question of the regional cooperation, known as the 3+3 format which is actually counts about more than one decade of its existence, but I believe that he decided that this is a good time to raise this question. I would like to stress your attention to what this cooperation and the prospect of this kind of cooperation especially with the prospective of one particular potential participant of this format I speak about Georgia, and you mentioned before that you have discussed some kind of cooperation prospects with your colleagues from the regional countries. How much do you believe that Georgia can participate in this kind of project, in this kind of cooperation while it has quite complicated relations with Russia on one hand and on the other it has its aspirations to integrate in the Western community, and we know while that the Western community and the regional big powers and relations so far are continuing to deteriorate it?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. I was actually supposed to discuss this issue with Georgian prime minister yesterday, but unfortunately he got coronavirus. I wish him good health and soonest recovery. His visit was scheduled on the 12th of April, but, of course, after he got coronavirus, it was postponed. Therefore, I did not have a chance to talk to him directly about that. But as soon as he recovers we will be waiting him to visit us. But with other neighbours, with President Erdogan, with President Putin, I discussed it openly and also there have been discussions on the very high levels of officials of Azerbaijan and Iran. I see that there is no difference in our approach. Azerbaijan, Turkey, Russia, and Iran share the same approach to regional cooperation. The main area of concentration now is the transportation, because it's a situation which is called "win-win". Everybody wins from that. Armenia silently is also in the boat, but publicly they say "no" because of what I already said, this disease which they need to be treated – Azerbaijanophobia and Turkophobia. So, what could be the advantages of this cooperation for countries, is very obvious. I think Armenia is a country which also will get a big share of advantage, because today they don't have a railroad connection with Russia. They don't have railroad connection with Iran. There was one unrealistic plan to build a railroad from Armenia to Iran, but I think they calculated and saw that it will cost three billion dollars. Good project but who is going to pay? That's a question. So, that project has been already abandoned. Any possibility of connection with Russian railroad for Georgia, I think, is not realistic, you know better because of what. Through Azerbaijan it was not possible either. So, if this project is implemented, Armenia will have access to Russia to Iran and also, potentially to Turkey by railroad. That will of course, create additional opportunities for the development of the country. Azerbaijan will connect its railroad with Nakhchivan, through Zangazur corridor and with Turkey, though, with Turkey we have already connections through Georgia, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars. Russia will have an additional connection with Turkey through the territories of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Iran with Armenia. And also, that could be part of the South-North transportation corridor from Iran to Russia, because you probably know that the last segment of the railroad on Iranian territory, Astara-Rasht, is not built. The works are going on there. But we are planning to build a railroad connection to our border with Armenia within next 2, maximum 2.5 years. This is for sure will be built, because already we allocated the budget and the work has started. As soon as it is done and 40 km of Zangazur also. But that should be done by Russian railroad, because Armenian railroad belongs to Russian Railroad Company, and we already got information that they are planning to do it. So, it's the South-North corridor, through Armenia also, through Nakhchivan, Armenia, Zangilan etc. Therefore, this is obvious advantages and we need to work in these directions. With respect to Georgia's reservations, I heard about them. I cannot say anything about that. I need to talk to prime minister, to listen to his position. But Georgia for us is not only a strategic partner but also a brotherly country, very close country, country which today, Georgia and Azerbaijan play extremely important role for European energy security. So, I think we can find a proper format of cooperation. Our intentions are that. With respect to tensions between Western countries and some regional countries, this is not something new. It has been always. It has kind of periods of aggravation, recession, but it's something which is permanent here in our region. So, we are used to that. I don't think that this kind of misunderstanding or confrontation or whatever will seriously damage our plans. We all very well remember as some of our Western partners were acting against the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars, trying to involve Armenia in this project so that the road goes not through Georgia but through Armenia. I remember, when I worked at the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan, how Western partners were advocating construction of their pipeline not through Georgia, but through Armenia. I am a witness and participant of all that. And how difficult it was for us to build this pipeline, because the World Bank for one year stopped financing it because of that. But did it change anything? No. And it will not change anything now. Therefore, I think those who do not support it okay, let them not support it. We don't mind but I don't think that any kind of interference or attempts to stop us from that will succeed. Therefore, I invite all

those who are hesitant to be a part of that. That could be also an additional corridor to Europe. And actually through Turkey it will go to Europe. So, everybody will benefit. Those who were against Baku-Tbilisi-Kars today are grateful to us for that. So, I think it will be the same. But we will of course, take into consideration any possible Georgian reservations with this issue.

**Dr. Michael Reynolds (Associate Professor at Princeton University, USA):** *Thank you very much Mr. President for taking the time to meet with us. I and my colleagues are genuinely grateful to you for giving us this opportunity to sit with you physically or virtually to discuss Azerbaijan's future and the future of the region. I also would like to say that I very much share your faith in the youth of Azerbaijan. The students I've met at ADA and other Azerbaijani universities have impressed me and I hope that we can continue to develop the ties with educational institutions in Azerbaijan. I can say that I am genuinely given the quality of Azerbaijan's youth as well as the opportunities have now been opened up for Azerbaijan and for the region with Azerbaijan's victory. I am genuinely optimistic about the future of this country. I am also optimistic about the region. For my question, I'd like to return to the issue of territory that you touched on in your response. As an outsider to this conflict, and outside observer, I can say that I think one of the prime drivers of the tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been the expansive Armenian claims to territory. Again, and I don't need to tell you but just to go over it first Armenia claims the territory mountainous Karabakh, then they started to claim the territory surrounding provinces and then as you mentioned, they also went on and threatened the possibility of taking more territory from Azerbaijan. And then in August of last year began revising claims to eastern Turkey. This is, I think, delusional. It's irresponsible, it's extraordinarily provocative, and I honestly don't know how to describe it perhaps, but as madness. During the recent war some Azerbaijanis made reference to Yerevan and other parts of territory of today's Republic of Armenia as being Azerbaijani lands. And as a historian I know that there is in fact some historical truth to that claim. And I also understand that in the context of a conflict for one side Armenia is making this outlandish, delusional claims to vast amounts of territory. There may be utility in reminding them that look you're not the only one who can play this game. I understand when Azerbaijanis have said that sort of thing to Armenians. But when I look at things from the Armenian perspective knowing their history and the current state of Republic of Armenia which is very small. As you know the population is tiny, they can barely populate their own country. This is one of the things about their claims to all these vast territories when they are barely able to hold on in their own country and the Armenians today who wonder if they, even with the status-quo will they be able to sustain it? So, my question is this. Azerbaijan refrained from making insinuations that the territory of the current Republic of Armenia belongs to Armenians. We refrain from making insinuations that this land is historically Azerbaijani and Azerbaijan might one day wish to take that territory.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you for your analysis. I fully share your views. You found the right word "madness" to put forward territorial claims to Turkey and to the neighbours. But again, in the 21st century it's very unusual that one country with a very limited capacity which can hardly provide normal living standards for its people has territorial claims to a country which is ten times bigger and a 100 times more powerful. But again, it is, I think, the part of the psychology that was based on the feeling that the whole world owes them everything. And this psychology led them to this humiliated situation which they are now situated. Still they think that everybody should help them. Probably you know that official Armenian government in their behind the doors discussions is accusing European Union for not helping them. They are accusing NATO being a member of ODKB kind of a counter NATO military organization. They are accusing NATO for not helping them, they are accusing Russia of not helping them. They accuse everybody except themselves. They cannot understand that the problem is within themselves. There is the biggest

threat to Armenia. The biggest threat to Armenia is now the Armenian psychology. They need to change. Maybe this very painful lesson which we taught them could be a turning point in their understanding of reality and understanding that if you called yourself an independent country then the tale of your people is in your hand. If you want to be protected, that's clear, they can join the Union State. There is a Union State between Russia and Belarus. Armenia, I know that some in Armenia talk about the Union State. Then, let them put down their flag and become "guberniya" of some other country and then they will be protected. So, this is kind of addition to what you have said. And you are absolutely right. First they said that Nagorno-Karabakh is an independent county, and then they started to publish maps of all the occupied territories calling it Nagorno-Karabakh, changing the names of our cities and villages, and then trying to frighten us with this new war for new territories. It was their defence minister Tonoyan who was saying that Armenia is preparing for new war for new territories. So, we showed what is a new war for old territories and now Tonoyan was kicked out. This is a lesson to all the rest who still think that they can talk with us in this manner. We did during the war what was necessary. We went until those limits which were right limits, and we did not do more than was needed. I understand that you in a very diplomatic way are saying that some Azerbaijanis claim that part of Armenia is an ancient Azerbaijani territory you mean me, of course, I understand. Thank you. Thank you for being so polite. Thank you for this question, because it's also a part of manipulation in Armenia that I have territorial claims. No, I don't. I can tell it publicly but at the same time we need to know the history. I fully agree with what you said about young generation. Sometimes young generation don't know the history, for instance. Even ourselves, our generation. We were taught fake history. Those who were presented as heroes when I was studying at school were actually criminals. And those who were eliminating Azerbaijani people, for instance, 26 Baku commissars. We were taught that they are heroes, they saved our homeland. But they were criminals, Shaumyan and others who were killing Azerbaijanis, conducting a massacre here and many other examples like that. Therefore, we don't want this generation, young generation either to be not aware about the realities. So, when I say that Zangazur is an ancient Azerbaijani land, this is truth. Zangazur was given to Armenia in 1920-101 years ago. Before that it belonged to us. When I say that Goyche, which they call Sevan now, is the lake where Azerbaijanis lived, it is also the truth. It's enough to look at the map of beginning of the 20th century and you will not find Sevan there, you will see Goyche. The same with Yerevan. They destroyed the historical part of Yerevan. It is an obvious fact. Azerbaijanis lived there, including my ancestors. So, this is the fact, but it does not mean that we have territorial claims. Yes, I can tell you even more, maybe you know but don't want to mention, maybe you don't know. I even said that we will return there. Yes, I said that. But I didn't say we will return there on tanks. I said that we will return. It means that why not. If we are returning to Zangazur corridor, if we are using the road, why should not we return to Yerevan? I think that the time will come and we will do it. So, once again, thank you for this question. It allowed me to make clarification and also to present my position we will remember our history, but we don't have any territorial claims against any country including Armenia. Thank you.

**Prof. Brenda Shaffer (Professor of University of Haifa, Israel):** *Thank you Mr. President and congratulations on the restoration of justice. Peaceful Ramadan to the families of the martyrs. From independent Azerbaijan succeeded in building an exceptional, modern and highly capable military force. The second Armenia-Azerbaijan war has been studied as the model of 21st century warfare with Azerbaijan having demonstrated possession of highly skilled special forces and not only possession of modern technologies but unique integration and application in the battlefield of these technologies. In the 1990s I visited Azerbaijan. It was hard to get people even to go to the battlefield, to go to the military. By this war you had people standing in line being turned away and volunteers from going to the military. My question is Mr. President-what are your lessons for the building of the*

*modern high-level military? What were the changes that happened in the Azerbaijani society that created the swell of support for the Azerbaijani military? Well, many think the war began in fall or late September 2020. Did it really begin with the Armenian attacks in Tovuz as you said according to the doctrine of new wars for new territories? Were they really the stage one of the war? And the September battles were the continuation of this war. Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you for your congratulations. You as a person who knows Azerbaijan for a long time, of course, have a lot of information and a lot of opportunities to compare and you are absolutely right. The difference between the second and first Karabakh war was particularly what you said. People were standing in the line. We announced partial mobilization and certain age groups were recruited. Those who were not filling those criteria were complaining. I know many cases that our people were complaining and writing a letter why they do not take me, I also want to go to fight, I also want to defend our motherland. I think this is the main factor of our victory. Of course, we built a strong army, we did a lot of trainings, we bought a lot of sophisticated weapons which helped us a lot to win and to save lives, because without those weapons we could have had much more victims. We had, I think, 2.5-3 times less lost lives than Armenian army taking into account that we were on counter-offensive and we were going from down to the hills. The main factor was that even those young people who have never seen those lands, their parents were born there, they thought as if they were fighting for their own hopes. We have seen the unity of all peoples who live in Azerbaijan. This is also one of the biggest assets. On many occasions conducting international events on multiculturalism and cultural diversity, I always was saying that one of the biggest assets of Azerbaijan is a multicultural, multi-faith society.

During this war, representatives of all nationalities, all ethnic groups were fighting until the last drop of their blood. They were fighting for their motherland. It's was such a strong consolidation, such a strong consolidation of Azerbaijani nation which consists of representatives of different ethnic groups which are united by the feeling of motherland, by our language, by our statehood. So, really I was very proud and I am very proud that we managed to grow these people, because as I said most of those who were fighting and who lost their lives were children when I came to power in 2003. But always Karabakh was number one item on all agendas inside the country, outside the country.

On all international events whether related to war and peace or related to social and economic development, Karabakh was always a priority in my comments. This is really a new Azerbaijan. Armenians did not know us well. They thought they are going to fight with Azerbaijan of 1992. But Azerbaijan is different, people are different, society is different, motivation is different. They thought, and I know it exactly, their previous leaders thought that we will forget, that time will pass, everybody will be tired, nobody wants war. There has been such a speculation sometimes in international media that Azerbaijan will never start anything, because their country is developing. They will never risk, President Aliyev will never risk stability for some uncertain advantage. But they did not understand what is inside us, what is in our soil. They did not understand that Karabakh for all of us is more than land. Karabakh is our dignity, is our destiny, it's our blood. That's why we demonstrated heroism, we demonstrated courage, and we went until the end and no one could have stopped us. Though you know that there have been many attempts to stop us from different sides but we went until the end. What happened in July was another provocation of Pashinyan, because Pashinyan was considered not to be part of this military gangster group. Therefore, previous leaders of Armenia were always treating him like a person who did not serve in the army, like a person who is weak, who doesn't have courage

etc. Therefore, he wanted to have a military victory. Especially after they lost in Nakhchivan just months after he came to power, but that was not his blame. Because he just came to power. He wanted a military victory. We know exactly that they were planning to retake Lalatapa, the territory which we gained during the April 2016 war. And he was trying to demonstrate that the previous regime of Sargsyan lost those territories and "brave" Pashinyan, chief commander retakes it. By the way, now, when they themselves start to understand more about the war, they start to publish articles and making statements that their attempt during the war to retake Lalatapa caused them a lot of lives. Actually part of the army was totally destroyed there. In July they wanted to occupy territories in Tovuz. It is clear, because we were accused by them that two our soldiers with the UAZ car came to attack their positions. This is ridiculous. We demonstrated during 44 days what our army is. If we wanted to take those lands we would have taken it, first and then why should we take the lands of Armenia? Why should we give Armenia a chance to apply to CSTO for military support? Are we crazy? No, they wanted to take the lands and so Pashinyan could come then and say: "I am a brave commander of an unbeatable Armenian army. I came here and stand in Tovuz". That's what they wanted. We pushed them back. And when we pushed them back, I can tell you even more, we could have moved forward, because they killed our general, they killed our officers. We had to take revenge. But I stopped our army. We did not cross the border. We just kicked them out of our territories and stopped though, already there in Tovuz mountain there were no Armenian troops. We could have easily gone kilometres ahead. But I said 'no, the time hasn't come'. Then they did another in August, in Goranboy. They sent a group to penetrate our positions and the head of that group was detained. And then September. So, that's because again, because of miscalculation, overestimation of themselves and underestimation of Azerbaijan. But they made a fatal mistake. And they now have to pay the price for that.

**Ms. Amanda Paul (Senior Policy Analyst, European Policy Centre, Belgium):** *Thank you very much President Aliyev. It's a great pleasure to join you here this morning. I'm based in Belgium, I want to ask a question about EU. Many in Azerbaijan criticized the approach of the EU during the war. How can EU regain its credibility and influence in the post war period?*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Frankly speaking, I did not see any serious criticism of EU during the conflict. Neither myself nor any of our establishment criticized EU as EU. I received a phone call from the President of European Council during the war. He expressed concern about that, what happened. So, we discussed. I informed him about the situation. Yes, there had been criticism about some EU leading member states. But they acted in their national capacity during the war but not as the EU member states. Therefore, with respect to EU, it's now Armenia who is criticizing EU for not helping. But it's a big question how EU could have helped? EU should have sent the troops there or what? I don't know. So, with respect to post conflict development and EU role, I said already, we did not get any messages from EU how they want or plan, if they want or planned help us with reconstruction, with resettlement of refugees. It will be a huge task for us. Not only from point of financial resources but also from methodology. We have been never in this situation when we had to recover the territories which are leveled to ground. There could be some international experience to give us advice how to properly plan it, what could be the steps, in which consequences the steps must be taken. And of course, if international organizations including EU will consider any provision of any assistance we will be grateful. I can tell you even more, with regard to pandemic, our negotiations with EU on the new agreement were a little bit frozen. But I already publicly said that as soon as COVID is over more or less, the situation will be more stable, we will restart. A big part of that agreement have already been agreed, only some 7-8 % of it needs to be agreed. Therefore, we are planning to continue our close cooperation with

EU and even those member states of EU which during the war and after war were attacking us, I think they also need to, some of them already made changes in their attitude. After war, I can tell you there was only one EU member state, whose foreign minister allowed himself very improper comments about Azerbaijan but we almost kept silent. Only our foreign ministry responded, because we were very "afraid" of this country. I advise you also to be very "afraid" of this country which attacked us brutally. I told all our officials keep silent, otherwise they will come and "occupy" us. Do you know which country is that? The country is called Luxembourg. I can tell you just for comparison, the territories which we liberated are a size of four Luxembourgs. Therefore, foreign minister of Luxembourg had better take care of himself and stop this insinuation. But apart from that, after war there have been nothing negative. We hope that EU will continue to be our big partner, especially as I said before, with nine members of EU we already have strategic partnership format of cooperation.

**Dr. Steven Klein (Tel-Aviv University, Israel):** *I want to thank you very much for your time. My two questions; the first is about messaging. You talked earlier about the solidarity in Azerbaijani society. I think we can see that. I have seen a lot of these signs around the country like "Shusha is ours", "Karabakh is ours" in Azerbaijani. With a big sign of the hashtag #don'tbelieveArmenia. So, I think that this is important. I can understand that from Israel we have experienced that too the messaging that comes down to the people. The messaging has created very strong commitment towards Karabakh at the same time you could imagine I mean I have talked to Azerbaijanis who feel hostility towards Armenians and justifiedly so. But it also makes Armenians feel unsafe particularly those in Nagorno-Karabakh. We know that you can try to make what is called "emotional deposit" the gestures you have done for Nagorno-Karabakh and using Azerbaijani territory. It is done as a positive gesture. But when it is done in a wrong time it can be emotional withdrawal. Because there still feeling that trauma that you have also spoken up and recognized. So, my question here is now Karabakh is under Azerbaijani control again. How all the messaging can be changed? What is next going to be beyond those billboards instead of saying Shusha is our, Karabakh is Azerbaijani. What will the next message be to create a new narrative where Azerbaijanis feel less hostile towards Armenians and Armenians of Karabakh will feel safe enough they would want to live when time comes to live under full Azerbaijani sovereignty, authority. My second question is about the status of women which we haven't addressed within that. The status of women according to research is highly correlated with the economic development and peace. I understand that Azerbaijan made a lot of progress in last 20 years or so. But sometimes closing that gap you can make a lot of progress. Closing that gap gets further, gets harder. So, I want to know how you see that and what do you see the government's role in furthering, advancing the status of women. So, there can be more diversity, more women around the table, making the decisions which shows according to the research will contribute to post-conflict development and cooperation. Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you very much. I will start from the second question, because women are always a priority. So, you will understand me. I think that the role of the women in Azerbaijan is pretty high in different sectors of our life and that was historically. Respect to women is a kind of historical tradition of Azerbaijani people. As you probably know, one of the first decisions of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, which was established in 1918, was to give the right to women to vote. It was in 1918. Emancipation of women at that time was one of the priorities and really today I think the achievements are obvious. For me, frankly speaking it is sometimes strange when Azerbaijan is perceived as a country where women do not have enough rights, or women's rights are deteriorating or the kind of discrimination, not at all. The fact that there is not many women here is because we have guests here. So, it is your table now. But women in Azerbaijan have very high ranking positions and you know, chairman of Parliament and even a higher position

is also held by women. With respect to reconstruction, of course, we count very much, because women usually in Azerbaijan are working in the sectors of education and healthcare. That will be the first priority on the liberated territories. The first hospitals, the first schools that's what we plan to build in the first place. Therefore, women will be provided with decent job.

With respect to the slogans and billboards, you know, "Karabakh is Azerbaijan" was said by me at Valdai conference in Sochi. Why? Because Prime Minister of Armenia Pashinyan being in Karabakh on rally said that "Karabakh is Armenia and period". That was the end of negotiations. That was wrong, first, it is not true. Second that was contradicting his own previous statements when he was saying that Karabakh is an independent country. So, how can it be Armenia and an independent country at the same time? That is a question to Mr. Pashinyan. Probably now, there is no need to ask him anymore. When I had a chance to speak in the conference and that was live. I could have said that in Baku maybe not many people could have heard. I said that live on Russian TV that "Karabakh is Azerbaijan and exclamation mark". That immediately became a hashtag, or how you call it, a slogan. Therefore, that was a main slogan for our victory, for all my statements. That's why, we see it everywhere and probably this will continue, because this is true. "Karabakh is Azerbaijan!" But with respect to the new billboards I already said about one. We put one "Welcome to Azerbaijan" on the roads which Armenians considered to be theirs. But it also irritates them. I do not know what to write. When we write "Karabakh is ours" they are not happy, when we write "Welcome to Azerbaijan", they are not happy. Probably, they need to have this post traumatic period to be treated well and as I said by politicians, by international community to guide them to adjust themselves with the new reality. But during the war and after war, we completely refrained from any hostile rhetoric. My comments, statements and messages to Azerbaijani people always added that Armenia should give us a timetable for withdrawal and we will stop war. And it happened. So, we didn't do something which was wrong we did only what was appropriate and on time.

**Prof. Dr. Cagri Erhan (Member of Presidential Council of Security and Foreign Policy Issues, Turkey):** *I would also like to congratulate you personally as Ali Bash Komandan of Azerbaijani Army and each and every member of Azerbaijani nation who wanted this victory, highly precious victory. You mentioned that Azerbaijani people had Turkish flags along with Azerbaijani flags in Azerbaijani cities. But I am sure you also know in every Turkish city we had Azerbaijani flags throughout this 44 days of war. We celebrated the victory as we are Azerbaijani citizens in Turkey as well. This period of high cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey showed that the sentence that two states one nation was not only rhetoric but also a reality. We commemorate late Heydar Aliyev with his leadership at this moment. I would like to ask a very short question. After the current developments, current situation and need dynamics in the region, do you think there is a need for Minsk Group and what would be the functions if there will be Minsk Group, new functions. Should they renew their functions in their existence? What is the aim of this 30 or 25 years old Group now? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you very much. Thank you for your kind words and for congratulations. We know that in Turkey our victory was received as a victory of all of us. We are very grateful for such a strong brotherly support as I said, from all segments of Turkish society, from ordinary people from everyone. So, we felt this solidarity and support which gave us additional power and strength. With respect to the Minsk Group, I met the ambassadors of the Minsk Group after war. I told them that when they were asking me how I can see the future, I asked them to give me some proposals, because it was basically Minsk Group, the group which always was giving proposals, of course, based on positions of Azerbaijan and Armenia but the



principles and topics on the table were elaborated by them. Of course, the internal composition and internal relations within Minsk Group were always their priority. Therefore, first of all, we need to know what is the position of the co-chairs – Russia, the United States, France. How they see the Minsk Group future functioning, because, it is them who actually are co-chairing this group. We think that the conflict is resolved. That is our position. Is there a room for a group which was supposed to help to resolve the conflict after the conflict is resolved? I do not know. At the same time, I am not in a position to say we do not need Minsk Group any longer, go away, no. Why should I? Therefore, I diplomatically asked them to think about to show creativity. They have been so creative during all these 29 years. So, show some more creativity. But I think if we talk seriously, there could be some areas where they can play their role, because as the post-conflict situation, not as a group which needs to help to resolve the conflict. Here I completely disagree with some of the representatives of the Minsk Group countries, that the conflict must be resolved yet. It has been resolved. If I say that it is resolved, it means that it is resolved. If Armenia says that it is not resolved, then I can ask the Armenian side how they see the resolution? What should we do? So, I think that they need to think something for themselves to be creative, to be supportive not to do something which can damage this fragile peace, not to give some unrealistic promises to Armenia and to try to be neutral, to try to be impartial and to try to seal this situation. When I talk about future peace agreement with Armenia, if Armenia would consider this option, then there could be a lot of room for international players. There are the issues of demarcation, delimitation, interaction. So, we are part of international community, we are part of the OSCE and the OSCE has a very special role in the region. Therefore, I think that they can be useful. But it has been quite some time that they did not visit us. I hope they will come soon with some proposals and we will definitely look at these proposals with due attention.

**Prof. Taras Kuzio (Professor of National University Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Ukraine):**

*Congratulations as well from Ukraine on liberation of your territories. It was not just Turkey which was unanimous in supporting Azerbaijan. Ukraine was also unanimous from every political force, every media outlet in the country. That was very important. Joking before I say a question. When I have been listening to this very interesting exchange of opinions, I am wondering whether the Armenian intelligence services were on a holiday for the last 10 or 20 years or maybe they did not know how to use Google. Perhaps, Yandex is not as good as Google, I don't know. But my serious question to you which I don't think has come up yet, relates to the previous question on the Minsk Group. The problem with the Minsk Group was that the US was absent from the region under two presidents. It is not a question of a political party, two different parties and France was biased. Both Houses of the French Parliament voted in November to recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. So, France was supporting separatism in Azerbaijan and then at the same time claiming to support Ukraine's territorial integrity in the Minsk Group over Donbas over Eastern Ukraine. So, kind of a contradictory very strange multivector foreign policy. The US here. What would you like to see from the new US administration in this region? Broader than the Minsk Group. What would you as the President of Azerbaijan like to see the US become more active, more involved, more on the ground. Is it not time for the US to return? Thank you.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you very much. Thank you first of all for your congratulations and convey gratitude to our friends in Ukraine who supported Azerbaijan. We followed that. Of course, during the war we were very sensitive to how countries react to what happens. Therefore, strong position from Ukrainian society was highly appreciated. Thank you. With respect to the questions, I fully agree with you that France was acting on the side of the separatists and this is true. I, on several occasions, during the war was talking openly about that. That was, of course, inappropriate, because maybe many of you don't know. They can tell you the story how France

became the co-chair, because France was not from the very beginning the co-chair. France became the co-chair of the Minsk Group upon the request of President Chirac. He insisted very much and he was asking my late father many times and then during my numerous meetings with late President Chirac he was always telling me the same story how he persuaded my father to allow France to be the co-chair of the Minsk Group. And he said your father was objecting and openly saying "no", because he said we have nothing to do against you. But you have very strong Armenian diaspora. This diaspora will influence on your decision-making process and you eventually will be on the side of Armenia. And the President Chirac persuaded him and promised him that it will not be the case. France will be neutral. After that my father gave agreement, because if he didn't give agreement, France would not be there. Just a reminder to some French politicians who probably do not know this story. I can tell you during all period of our close cooperation with France, this neutrality and impartiality was observed with different level of neutrality, if I may say so. Even I can tell you that when President Hollande was attending the ceremony in Armenia on 24 April, the same day he took the plane and came to Baku, the same day. I was at that time in Chanakkala together with President Erdogan celebrating the victory in Chanakkala and it happened that I arrived in Baku later than President Hollande. He came earlier and we met the next morning. I highly appreciated that. Really appreciate it until today. I remember it as a real sign of politician, statesman, responsible person, who was a co-chair of the Minsk Group. He clearly understood that if he goes to Yerevan on this occasion which will be highly unpopular in Azerbaijan, he should come here in order to show respect to us, to have balance, to demonstrate neutrality. Unfortunately, this diplomatic practice was lost during the war and even before the war. An unbalanced approach to Armenia and Azerbaijan from France was not only during the war, it was before the war. There are many indicators. I just don't want to take much of your time. What happened during the war was absolutely strange and unfortunately what happened, that happened. But did it stop us from what we planned? No. Could they influence our will? No. And that was also miscalculation. I want to talk openly. You know, big countries are sometimes used that whatever they say to some other countries immediately is being implemented. They are used to that. It is a bad habit. They need to get rid of this bad habit. It is like smoking. They become addicted to that. And when somebody doesn't do what you want or what you say they become angry. Their anger bothers them. Nothing which was said to me during the war by anyone to stop or to give back territories we have already liberated, was done. But I should also say that after war situation changed and there have been delegations from France, there have been messages and proposals to normalize relations. I said we didn't do anything wrong to our relations. We always were persistent, always were committed to cooperation. But what happened, happened and you are absolutely right when you say that France strongly supports Ukrainian territorial integrity and at the same time did not support territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. So, I know how it called, I just don't want to be rude. With respect to what US can do. You said yourself in the beginning of your comment that US was absent. So, US was absent and we resolved the problem. So, I am not saying that US should be absent. But we didn't get any message from new administration so far, any message. Zero. Administration has been established since January, even before because the process is underway. Today it is April. Zero message. Mr. Blinken called Pashinyan. I don't know what they talked about. But again the balances disturbed. I am not saying that we are waiting for the call of Mr. Blinken. No. But it is a co-chair. They should at least behave in a way that is balanced. So, we didn't get any messages. We do not know what is the position of US government on issue related to our region. I received a kind letter from President Biden with respect to Novruz Holidays. I am grateful for that. But that was probably the only message of congratulations. I know this kind of messages are sent to some other countries. So that is probably all.

**Prof. Dr. Ahmad Uysal (Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, Turkey):** *Thank you, Mr. President. I want to congratulate one more time. We are very proud of you, from Turkey, from ORSAM Centre. We yesterday visited the Aghdam region and we observed destruction. Honestly, it was like a war zone without fighting a war. I mean, fighting was not there, but it was like a war zone. And destruction honestly disappointed us. The only thing they did was dig holes like moles, like "Kostebek" in Turkish we say. They didn't bring any investment, they didn't build anything there. It was like very sad history. They destroyed houses, and theatres, and mosques and etc. I suggest under your, of course, permission, maybe you are also thinking of that, and International Karabakh Forum that we can be also a part of it or a partner to it. It will attract a lot of Turkish tourists also, academicians, businessmen and etc. Thank you very much again.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you very much. Very good idea. I think ADA can work on that. I fully support the idea of International Karabakh Forum. Good idea with broad international participation. Events may be also here, in the liberated territories. What you have seen in Aghdam is almost everywhere. Fuzuli is even worse, because in Fuzuli there is no building at all. In Aghdam they kept a half destroyed mosque for two purposes. First, it was kind of a landmark for Armenian artillery to measure the distance and second, it was an observation point. Because that direction of our possible attack was expected by them. And if you look precisely on the way how we liberated territories you will see that we didn't go directly to Aghdam, because Armenians were waiting us there. They built a very multi-stage defence lines. So, there could have been a lot of losses. Therefore, our road to Aghdam was opened after and Aghdam was next after Shusha. So, we were planning to go there from other side. As Armenian prime minister said, if he didn't sign a capitulation act on the 10th November they could have had 20 thousand losses. I am not sure about the number, because if they had 20 thousand soldiers in Aghdam why they didn't fight. It is a question. Why did they keep 20 thousand soldiers in Aghdam while they lost the territories which they occupied? But it is another story. In Fuzuli it is even worse. In Fuzuli there is no building at all. Everything is demolished. In Gubadli, they kept only two or three buildings which they used as a military storage. In Zangilan, they made some settlement in Zangilan. They wanted the people to settle but they didn't have human resources. I can also tell you what they have done to Shusha. They were always saying that Shusha is an Armenian city while it is a relatively new city. It was established in 1752 by Panahali khan who came from Aghdam region and who selected that territory as a fortress in order to defend himself, because he was attacked from different sides. Shusha was settled by Panahali khan and ruled by him and his children and grandchildren until Ibrahimkhalil khan signed a Kurakchay treaty with Russia in 1805. And he thought he saves his life, but after one year Ibrahimkhalil khan and his family members were killed. It is a different story. But we need to know this history. Definitely. I ask you to look at that history of Kurakchay peace agreement and what happened to the ruler of Karabakh after he signed it. So, in Shusha they said it is Armenian, but it was in such a terrible shape. When I came there first time, I was really surprised. It is an absolute devastation. They didn't build any building. Only two villas they built for leaders of Armenia and the so-called Karabakh regime in the area which was in Soviet times a sanatorium. Only destruction. I can tell you even more. When we entered Hadrut region and the territories where there have been Armenian settlements, I have not seen such a poverty anywhere maybe for the last 20 years. The question is, what did they do with all those money, which they were collecting from diaspora? Every year they were conducting marathons collecting tens of millions of dollars in California, in France, in Russia, everywhere. You cannot see it there. It doesn't exist. So, we will have to restore it and we will restore it. And I think Karabakh Forum is a good idea. So, thank you for this initiative.

**Mr. Daniel Pommier Vincelli (Adjunct Professor at Sapienza University, Italy):**

*Congratulations for restoring your national integrity. I think it is a lifetime achievement for a political leader. So, compliments on personal with this too. I want to ask, when do you think the IDPs will be allowed to return to the liberated territories? I know it is a long process that takes time. But I guess you can give us some highlights in general terms of the returning process. Thank you, Mr. President.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** We want to return them as soon as possible. They have been waiting for so long time. But the biggest problem is mines. Armenia didn't give us the mine map, though, we know that they have it. After the war stopped we have more than one hundred casualties only among civilians, not to mention military servicemen. And among those more than one hundred, more than twenty were killed by the mines. So, this is another war crime. The war is over why you don't give us the mine maps so we can clean those territories. Therefore, a lot of things are to be done with demining. Demining is a very long process and it takes time because we don't have enough qualified personnel. We are now organizing training and also purchasing equipment. The second important issue, and it has already started, is assessment of the damage, because we plan to sue Armenia in international legal institutions for these devastations what they have done. Therefore, we are documenting all the devastations and destructions. We are creating special passports for every building so that it is in the history and it will be a document to have a legal procedure. And of course, infrastructure projects, because we cannot send the people in the middle of nowhere. There should be decent living standards. We already started the projects. I can name some of them. For instance, construction of highways already started from Fuzuli to Shusha, from Shusha to Jabrayil, from Horadiz to Zangilan, from Barda to Aghdam. All these are already in the process. The budget has been approved. Power generation, the lines, the line to Shusha have already been built. Power station in Shusha will be opened soon. And they said maximum two years all Karabakh will be electrified and we will have access capacity. Then water supply. There are no water pipes. If people go there, what are they going to eat? What are they going to drink? How are they going to have their agricultural activity? We need to plan properly. And city planning, of course, because everything is leveled to the ground. Therefore, there will be new city planning project. It is also now in the process. We started immediately. I can tell you that the first city planning project which we will approve is Aghdam and other cities also. We started already one pilot project in one of the villages in Zangilan—"smart village". I think the beginning of the reconstruction will start next month maybe in June. Hopefully by the end of the year that pilot project can be already implemented. At the same time, in my communications with our partners from different countries, I already raised this issue to attract companies who can provide us with some ideas of city planning, village planning. We want to invite these companies to work with us, because our construction capability is not enough to rebuild these territories. As I said, four Luxembourgs we have to rebuild. It is a serious task. Therefore, it is difficult to say when all of them will be returned but they will be returned in stages. Most probably, the return will start from those villages which are situated close to infrastructure. For instance, in Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, there will be easier to bring lines of electricity and water and slowly-slowly we will continue. At the same time, we are planning to build an airport in Lachin, because to get to Lachin is not easy. We need to have a cargo plane there in order to develop. And the road to Kalbajar is also being built. Existing road now is under control of the Russian peacekeepers. We are using this road but sometimes it is not known when and how. Therefore, we need to build a lot of tunnels because the height of the mountains is 3,500 meters and these roads didn't exist before. So, again it is a little bit difficult for me to say exactly when but in stages probably, hopefully starting from the next year first IDPs already must be settled.

**Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Taimur Akram (Executive Director of Centre for Global and Strategic Studies, Pakistan):** *I would suggest to break the protocol. Actually, we had arranged live coverage of this conference in Pakistan through your Facebook page and a lot of young people are watching. Just texted me to tell you that your leadership is not only the source of motivation for the Azerbaijani youth but for the youth in Pakistan also. And especially, told me to ask all the participants to have a special clap for the President.*

**President Ilham Aliyev:** Thank you. Thank you very much. It has been already presented to you. It is a first edition, first edition of what we have done, about the former look of the cities and the destruction. There will be many books like that. But this is the first edition and it is already distributed. So, you are the first receivers of this book. So, thank you once again for being with us, thank you for your questions.

## Letter dated 4 May 2021 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations H.E. Mr. António Guterres

I am writing to inform you of the initial results of the ongoing investigation by the General Prosecutor's Office regarding the intentional killing of Azerbaijani civilians by the servicemen of the armed forces of Armenia in the Bashlibel village of the Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan in the course of the latter's invasion by Armenia in April 1993.

Having regained access to the territories of Azerbaijan following their liberation after an almost 30-year-long military occupation of Armenia, the relevant authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan are now able to collect additional material evidence with regard to numerous heinous crimes, including crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by the armed forces of Armenia in the course of the aggression against Azerbaijan.

As the result of these efforts, new details became unearthed regarding the mass killings of Azerbaijani civilians in the Bashlibel village of the Kalbajar district in April 1993. Thus, it was established that in the course of an attack by the armed forces of Armenia on the village on 3 April 1993, 62 civilian residents had to flee from the invading Armenian forces and took refuge in caves located 3 km away from the village. On 18 April 1993, the armed forces of Armenia found the civilians hiding in the caves and subjected them to intensive fire from machine guns and other types of weapons. As a result, 12 civilians, including 1 child and 1 teenager, were killed on the spot inside the caves. The graves of those 12 civilians have been identified on the basis of the testimonies by the eyewitnesses who had been able to escape from the caves and managed to return later on to the area on 12 May 1993, secretly, to bury their fellow villagers. The remains of killed civilians have been exhumed and collected by the investigation team for the purpose of subsequent medical examination and genetic tests.

It has been further identified that 14 other civilians, including 3 children, were taken as hostages and subjected to torture and other inhumane treatment, as a result of which 9 of them died due to physical and psychological injuries inflicted upon them. The remaining civilians encircled by the armed forces of Armenia survived the massacre and managed to reach the safe zone under the control of the armed forces of Azerbaijan, after 113 days by crossing the mountainous passes. Investigative procedures continue to identify the other details of this serious war crime, including identification of perpetrators and masterminds.

It should be also emphasized that the entire village was razed to the ground and all the properties belonging to its residents were completely destroyed.

The Bashlibel massacre is by no means an isolated case, but adds to numerous previously identified war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Armenia in the course of its armed aggression against Azerbaijan. Comprehensive investigation to all those crimes is of critical importance for justice and post-conflict reconciliation. In order for the peace to be sustained, justice must be served to all those who have fallen victim to past wrongdoings. This is of the utmost necessity for not allowing the same horrific events to be repeated in the future.

In this regard, it is of vital importance that Armenia finally abandon its refusal to take any action with regard to addressing numerous cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by its armed forces and cooperate with Azerbaijan and the wider international community with a

view to bringing the perpetrators to justice. With the end of the conflict, it is high time for Armenia to live up to its obligations under international humanitarian law and take practical steps to shed light on dark pages of its armed aggression against Azerbaijan.

In this context, Armenia's continued refusal to cooperate on the issue of establishing the whereabouts of close to 4,000 Azerbaijanis who went missing in the period of the military hostilities in 1991–1994 must be expeditiously addressed. Identification of the fates of the missing persons is necessary for thousands of their relatives and closed ones to finally find consolation.

Armenia's persistent refusal to provide information on missing persons is particularly incomprehensible in view of the fact that all the conditions continue to be created by Azerbaijan for the retrieval of the bodies of the Armenian servicemen fallen in the course of recent military hostilities. Members of the armed forces of Azerbaijan at the expense of risking their lives continue to facilitate the search operations for the armed forces of Armenia as well as relatives of the missing Armenian servicemen. Thus far, around 1,500 corpses of the Armenian servicemen were found and handed over to the Armenian side. In the course of the search operations, one officer of the armed forces of Azerbaijan has lost his life due to the explosion of the Armenia-laid mine in the liberated Sugovushan village while facilitating the retrieval of bodies of the fallen Armenian soldiers. Against this backdrop, Armenia's continuous non-cooperation on the establishment of the fates of thousands of Azerbaijani missing persons cannot have any justification.

With the signing of the two trilateral statements by the leaders of Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation and Armenia, on 10 November 2020 and 11 January 2021, respectively, both Armenia and Azerbaijan have the unique chance to leave the tragic pages of enmity and hostility behind and normalize their relations on the basis of mutual recognition of and respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders.

It is within this understanding that I appeal to you once again with the request to extend your contribution to the establishment of the truth over numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated against Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis. I also call upon you to render assistance in bringing clarity to the fates of thousands of persons missing due to the conflict, as well as addressing the imminent threat posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. These are all of crucial importance in order to translate into reality the vision of peace, security and cooperation of the mentioned trilateral statements to the benefit of the peoples of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as broader regional peace and stability.

Azerbaijan expects that the international community will stay firm in defence of values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law by taking decisive measures to persuade Armenia to become a genuine partner for peace ceasing its revanchist actions and rhetoric and, instead, focusing on elimination of harsh consequences of the war it had unleashed against Azerbaijan.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## **Letter dated 4 June 2021 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations H.E. Mr. António Guterres**

With reference to my previous letters I am writing to inform you of the steps taken by the law-enforcement bodies of the Republic of Azerbaijan to investigate war crimes and other serious crimes committed by members of the armed forces of Armenia.

The State Security Service and the Office of the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Azerbaijan have completed an investigation into the case of 14 members of the sabotage group which was detained in December 2020 in the Khojavand district of the Republic of Azerbaijan as the result of a joint anti-terror operation. It was established in the course of the investigation that these citizens of Armenia together with other members of the armed forces of that country had illegally crossed the state border of Azerbaijan on November 26-27, 2020, took up combat positions in forests and other areas in the north-western part of the Khojavand district and carried out attacks on Azerbaijani citizens and civilian and military infrastructure.

The indictment based on articles 214.2.1 and 214.2.3 (terrorism committed on prior arrangement by group of persons, by organized group or criminal organization with application of firearms or subjects used as a weapon), 279.2 (attacks on enterprises, institutions, organizations or on individuals as part of armed formations or groups not provided for by the legislation) and other articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan was sent to the Court for consideration. The court examination is expected to start soon, while the investigation into the case of other members of the sabotage group is ongoing.

The Prosecutor General's Office has also completed the investigation on another episode initiated against the two citizens of Armenia, Ludwig Mkrtchyan and Alyosha Khosrovyan, and submitted to the Court for the consideration. These persons are indicted for violation of Articles 113 (torture) and 115.2 (infringement of laws and customs of war) along with several other articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

L.Mkrtchyan was detained by members of the armed forces of Azerbaijan on October 20, 2020 in the Malikjanli village of the Fuzuli district of Azerbaijan. The investigation has established, including by the eyewitness testimonies that in the course of military hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the early 90s, the said person was involved in committing war crimes against the citizens of Azerbaijan. Acting as an interpreter for the special services of Armenia, he participated in the interrogation of one Azerbaijani citizen taken hostage by Armenia in the Ballija forest near the town of Khojaly and tortured this Azerbaijani captive. He also beat and tortured other 11 Azerbaijani citizens in Armenian captivity in Khojavand and Aghdara towns of Azerbaijan, as well as in the Shusha prison. On a separate episode, he is indicted for killing an Azerbaijani prisoner of war with a machine gun.

Alyosha Khosrovyan subjected a soldier of the armed forces of Azerbaijan to cruel and inhumane treatment, while being a prisoner of war in Armenian captivity in 1994, and forced him to compulsory labor. A. Khosrovyan also tortured Azerbaijani soldiers in the Shusha prison, systematically beating them and keeping them hungry, and thereby causing serious physical and mental suffering to them in violation of international humanitarian law norms regarding the humane treatment of prisoners of war as protected persons.



The Baku Military Court is currently considering the case of the two afore-mentioned Armenian citizens. The sittings of the Court are open for the media and the public, including the representatives of foreign countries and international organizations accredited in Azerbaijan.

On another account, an investigation into the criminal case against Lebanese citizen Viken Eulcekjian has also been completed and submitted to the Court. The said person is indicted for participation in military operations against the Republic of Azerbaijan as a mercenary in exchange of material reward of 2,500 USD. For this purpose, together with other persons forming an organized group, he illegally crossed the international border of Azerbaijan and joined other mercenaries fighting against the Republic of Azerbaijan. V.Eulcekjian is charged under articles 114.3 (participation of a mercenary in a military conflict or military operation), 214.2.1 (terrorism committed by a group of persons by prior arrangement, by an organized group or criminal association (organization)) and 318.2 (illegal crossing of the state border on prior arrangement by a group of persons or by an organized group) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The above-mentioned facts revealed through the investigation and by the eyewitness testimonies are illustrative of the scale and gravity of crimes committed in the course of the armed aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan. A thorough investigation into all such cases and bringing all the perpetrators to justice continue to be essential. There should be no impunity for all past crimes in order not to allow the same tragedies to be repeated in the future. This would also discourage aggressive revanchism in Armenia and contribute to peace and security in the region.

The international community has also legal and moral responsibility to expeditiously address the deliberate inaction of Armenia in taking legal and practical measures in respect to wide-range crimes the latter committed against Azerbaijan and its citizens. Of particular importance is the establishment of whereabouts of close to 4000 Azerbaijanis who went missing in the course of the armed aggression of Armenia in 1991-94 as well as the release of maps of the mined areas by Armenia in the recently liberated territories of Azerbaijan.

Yet, amidst the lack of adequate reaction and steps by the international community, the political-military leadership of Armenia seems to be encouraged to take further destabilizing actions. Armenia brazenly resorts to series of provocations along the state border with Azerbaijan in view of its domestic political situation ahead of the snap parliamentary elections.

On May 27, 2021, the armed forces of Azerbaijan curbed yet another attempt of the armed forces of Armenia to infiltrate into the territory of Azerbaijan. 6 (six) members of the two different reconnaissance-sabotage groups of the armed forces of Armenia were detained in the Kalbajar district deep inside the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan at geographic coordinates of N 40°09'06" and E 45°58'07". The afore-mentioned detained persons are currently under investigation being conducted by the law-enforcement bodies of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Armenia's senior political and military leadership have confirmed the fact that the detained individuals were laying mines on the supply routes of the Azerbaijani military posts in the proximity to the state border. Yet, at the same time Armenia attempts to present the detained persons as "prisoners of war". These claims are totally unsubstantiated under the applicable norms of international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, I would like to draw your attention to the latest reports of the Armenian mass media regarding disrespectful treatment of about 200 bodies of the fallen Armenian soldiers, which have been concealed by the Armenian authorities and after 7 months of the end of the hostilities have not yet been returned to their families.

All these vividly illustrate yet another time that the true intention of the Armenian authorities exploiting the issue of missing persons and the so-called "prisoners of war" is to mislead the international community and manipulate its own society through fostering anti-Azerbaijani hatred.

In view of the above-mentioned, I renew my urgent appeal to you to take all measures within your authority to decisively reject the groundless accusations of Armenia against Azerbaijan and to persuade this country to live up to its international obligations with a view to ending impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The sooner justice is served to all victims of these heinous crimes, the higher will be chances of ensuring long-awaited peace and security in our region.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## **Letter dated 6 August 2021 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations H.E. Mr. António Guterres**

With reference to my previous letters, I am writing once again to draw your attention to the continued refusal by Armenia to release the maps of mined areas in the conflict-affected territories of Azerbaijan.

Since my last letter, of 4 June 2021, in a series of correspondence on the same topic, Armenia has on two occasions submitted mine maps to Azerbaijan upon the mediation efforts of our international partners. The formularies shared by Armenia were meant to provide information about the places of approximately 200,000 anti tank and anti-personnel land mines planted only in three formerly occupied districts of Azerbaijan, namely Aghdam, Fuzuli and Zangilan. Yet, as a result of subsequent analysis by Azerbaijani specialists, it has been identified that almost half of these formularies are only partially filled in, while one fourth are either completely false or contain no information pertinent to demining.

The release of mine maps of other conflict-affected territories as well as the filling-in of the missing information in the already shared maps are still pending owing to the overt refusal of Armenia, in violation of international humanitarian law, as well as the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020 of the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation.

It is of particular relevance to note that, after months-long denial of the existence of mine maps, the Prime Minister of Armenia publicly declared that the exchanged information is only a tiny portion of the overall mine maps that are at the disposal of the Armenian side. On the one hand, such a statement clearly testifies to the level of sincerity of Armenia on such an extremely sensitive issue affecting human life. It also provides a clue with regard to the horrific scale of contamination by Armenia of territories of Azerbaijan with land mines and other explosive devices.

On the other hand, this statement made by the Armenian Prime Minister during his election campaign was apparently inspired by the prevalent attitude in Armenia of continued enmity against Azerbaijan. Armenia's continued refusal to share all mine maps is illustrative of the revanchist attitude that the Armenian political-military establishment continues to hold and instigate in its society. Such confrontational zero-sum thinking poses a serious challenge for post-conflict stabilization and normalization efforts, which Azerbaijan is committed to making together with relevant regional and international actors. With its position regarding the submission of mine maps, Armenia demonstrates how far it is from taking a reconciliatory approach with a view to eliminating the consequences of the conflict and embarking on genuine efforts for post-conflict cooperation and normalization.

Since the signing of the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020, which announced the end of all military activities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, more than 150 Azerbaijanis, including civilians, among them journalists and other media workers, engineers and other specialists engaged in post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan, have either died or been seriously injured owing to mine explosions. These include the mines that were planted by Armenia after the cessation of all military activities during its retreat from the territory of Azerbaijan.

In view of such drastic humanitarian and human rights consequences of the massive mine contamination of territories of Azerbaijan, there is an urgent need for the international community, first and foremost the United Nations, to take adequate steps. Yet, the sense of impunity, which Armenia holds in view of the lack of such steps, leads to further human costs and material damage and undermines overall post conflict peacebuilding efforts. It must eventually be realized that the release of mine maps is not a bargaining chip, but an obligation under applicable customary international humanitarian law.

It is with this understanding that I appeal to you once again to reiterate my earlier call for your active engagement with Armenia to persuade it to finally honour its obligations under humanitarian law by releasing the maps of the mined areas. In parallel, your leadership is also of necessity in mobilizing international assistance for humanitarian demining in Azerbaijan.

*(Signed)* **Jeyhun Bayramov**

## Excerpts from the statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the General Debates of the 76<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly

September 23, 2021



Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Last September, addressing the UN General Assembly I drew your attention to continuing occupation of territories of Azerbaijan by Armenia and aggressive statements and actions of the Armenian government. Today, a year later, I proudly say that Armenia was defeated on the battlefield and Azerbaijan put an end to the occupation.

Armenia, for about 30 years, kept under occupation almost 20 percent of the territory of our country. The occupation was accompanied with notorious war crimes and crimes against humanity. Armenia committed Khojaly genocide in February 1992, killing hundreds of civilians including 106 women and 63 children. 1275 Azerbaijanis were taken hostage, out of which 150 are still missing. Khojaly genocide has been recognized by 13 countries. Ethnic cleansing carried out by Armenia resulted in more than one million Azerbaijanis becoming refugees and internally displaced persons.

The UN Security Council adopted four resolutions in 1993 demanding immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of armed forces of Armenia from Azerbaijan's occupied territories. However, these and all other similar decisions adopted by relevant international organizations, including the UN General Assembly, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Non-Aligned Movement, OSCE, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and European Parliament were ignored by Armenia.

While some resolutions of the Security Council are implemented within days, in our case they remained unfulfilled for 27 years, which is a clear manifestation of double standards. There is

a need to join efforts to elaborate mechanism of implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions in order to avoid selective approach.

The OSCE Minsk Group was established in 1992 with the aim to find resolution to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It could be possible for the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to accomplish their task if they would take resolute actions for compelling Armenia to end its military aggression against Azerbaijan. Throughout the conflict, Armenia with its attitude and actions demonstrated that its sole aim was to maintain the status-quo and consolidate the occupation. On many occasions I raised the necessity of imposing sanctions on Armenia. Regretfully, there was no international sanction imposed on Armenia to enforce the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions.

In 2018, the Kocharyan-Sargsyan regime of war criminals was overthrown in Armenia. We had some hopes that the new government of Armenia would seriously engage in negotiations. We were ready to reciprocate any positive signal coming from Armenia. 2018-2019, it was one of the calmest periods in the former line of contact. However, the regime replacement in Armenia was not followed by real changes on the ground in spite of Azerbaijan's positive actions. The new government of Armenia also opted for the continuation of occupation instead of peaceful neighbourhood with Azerbaijan.

During the last 2 years of the conflict, Armenia deliberately destroyed the negotiation process. The Government of Armenia made a number of provocative statements and actions like saying "Karabakh is Armenia, and period" and "Not an inch of occupied land back". The then defence minister of Armenia openly threatened Azerbaijan with new aggression and occupation of new territories. Armenia put forward unacceptable and groundless so-called seven conditions and demanded to change the negotiations format, to start from the "zero point" and to involve the puppet regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories in negotiation process. Attempt by Armenian government to change the format and substance of negotiations was unpleasant surprise for the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, whose efforts were paralyzed by irresponsible and dangerous actions of Armenia.

Furthermore, in gross violation of international law, including Geneva Conventions, Armenia was blatantly implementing the policy of illegal settlement of people mainly from Middle East with Armenian origin in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Encouraged by the long-lasting sense of impunity, Armenia was also announcing construction of new roads from Armenia to occupied territories to further consolidate the result of its aggression and speed up the illegal settlement.

In July 2020, Armenia perpetrated military provocation along the state border with Azerbaijan. As a result of the artillery strike inflicted on Azerbaijan's Tovuz district, 13 military servicemen and civilians were killed.

Later in August last year, Armenian sabotage group attempted to penetrate through the former line of contact to commit terror acts against Azerbaijani military servicemen and civilians but it was successfully neutralized.

In my statement at the General Debate of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly on 24 September last year, I had warned that, "hostile, Azerbaijanophobic statements and provocations of Armenian leadership demonstrate that Armenia is preparing for a new aggression against Azerbaijan."

Three days later on the 27th September last year, Armenia launched a large-scale attack against military positions and civilians of Azerbaijan. In response, Azerbaijan, using its inherent right of self-defence as enshrined in the article 51 of the UN Charter, started a counter-attack on its own territories against Armenia.

During 44 days, armed forces of Armenia heavily shelled districts and cities situated along the frontline, namely Aghdam, Aghjabadi, Beylagan, Dashkasan, Fuzuli, Goranboy, Tartar. Armenia also fired at Ganja, Barda, Mingachevir, Gabala, Siyazan, Khizi and other cities situated far away from the former frontline. One of missiles was intercepted by Azerbaijani Air Defence Forces in Khizi, close to Baku, which shows that the capital city Baku was also target of Armenian missile attack. Armenia was using ballistic missiles, like Scud and Iskander-M, as well as forbidden white phosphorus and cluster munitions. These war crimes of Armenia resulted in more than 100 civilians, including 11 children being killed, more than 450 wounded. More than 12,000 civilian infrastructures, including private houses in Azerbaijan have been destroyed or severely damaged. Abided by the fundamental principle of international humanitarian law on the distinction between combatants and civilians, Azerbaijan never reciprocated Armenia's vicious war crimes by targeting civilians.

Armenia also recruited mercenaries and foreign fighters from abroad and deployed them against Azerbaijan.

During 44-day war Azerbaijan liberated a large part of occupied territories, including cities of Jabrayil, Hadrut, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadli and Shusha. In total more than 300 cities and villages were liberated on the battlefield. Armenia had to sign an act of capitulation on 10 November 2020. Accordingly, Armenia was obliged to withdraw its troops from the remaining part of Azerbaijan's territories, namely Aghdam, Lachin and Kalbajar regions. Azerbaijan, itself, enforced the implementation of the abovementioned UN Security Council resolutions, probably, it was the first case in the world since the establishment of the UN.

Azerbaijan resolved the 30-year-long conflict and restored its territorial integrity and historical justice by military-political means. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was left in the past. There is no administrative territorial unit called Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. We have created Karabakh and Eastern Zangazur economic zones by the Presidential decree signed on 7 July this year. Using this occasion, I would like to call on all the UN Member States and the UN Secretariat to avoid using legally non-existing, politically biased and manipulative names while referring to our territories.

The building of multi-layered defence lines and fortifications with long trenches, tunnels and bunkers by Armenia for years in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan proves that Armenia did not intent to return those territories by any means.

During almost 30-year-long occupation Armenia has deliberately destroyed cities and villages, looted and plundered all cultural and religious sites of Azerbaijan turning them into textbook example of urbicide and culturicide. After the Second World War, probably, annihilation of cities in such a magnitude has not happened anywhere else in the world. 9 Azerbaijani cities and hundreds of villages have been barbarically wiped out by Armenia. Armenia attempted to erase the traces of Azerbaijani people living in these territories for centuries. Aghdam city was destroyed to such an extent that it was called as "Hiroshima of Caucasus". After the liberation, our Army could not find a single safe building in Fuzuli city to raise the Azerbaijani flag.

Out of 67 mosques in the territories which were under Armenian occupation, 65 have been razed to the ground and the remaining 2 have been severely damaged and desecrated, including by being used as stables for pigs and cows in total disrespect to all Muslims of the world. Even the graveyards were desecrated, destroyed, and looted.

During visits to liberated territories, foreign diplomats, representatives of international organizations and international journalists have witnessed the barbarism committed by Armenia. The facts of the full destruction of cities and villages, including the cultural and religious heritage sites of Azerbaijani people has been widely documented and broadcasted by international media and independent experts. Each delegation in the United Nations has been provided with an illustrative book which contains brief information and photos of our towns and villages before and after the occupation. It reflects the total destruction of religious and historic monuments of Azerbaijan.

Armenia has committed severe ecocide in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan. 60,000 hectares of our forests have been destroyed, cut down and taken away, soil and rivers have been polluted and contaminated.

Armenia used water reserves to create an artificial environmental crisis on the formerly occupied territories. In 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted resolution entitled "Inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan are deliberately deprived of water" demanding the Armenian authorities to cease using water reservoirs as tools of political influence or an instrument of pressure. This resolution was totally ignored by Armenia, which continued to use the Sarsang water reservoir as a tool of humanitarian and environmental terrorism. Armenia was intentionally opening the floodgates during the winter months to cause flooding in the surrounding areas and closing them in summer to deprive people and farms from water in the former frontline region. Armenia has been severely polluting transboundary river called Okhchuchay causing irreversible degradation of ecosystem of the area along the river in Azerbaijan. Regrettably, some foreign companies are also participating in this environmental crime.

Armenia illegally exploited natural resources, including gold and other precious metals and minerals of the formerly occupied lands and exported it to the international markets. Based on solid facts, we have identified companies from different countries illegally exploiting Azerbaijan's natural resources and conducting other illegal activities in the formerly occupied territories. We have already started taking legal actions against those companies. They will be held accountable for illegally exploiting our natural resources in the formerly occupied lands.

We have around 4,000 citizens registered as missing persons from the first Karabakh War. Armenia must provide us with information about their fate. We have solid proofs that almost all of them have been tortured and killed, and buried in mass graves by Armenian military in violation of international humanitarian law. In April 2021, remains of 12 civilians killed by Armenian war criminals have been identified in liberated Bashlibel village of Kalbajar district in a mass grave.

Armenia must bear state responsibility for military aggression and other grave crimes committed against Azerbaijan under international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The despotic warlords, who came to power in Armenia as a result of coup d'état and ruled for 20 years from 1998 to 2018, were completely doomed to failure in achieving their nefarious dreams and goals during the three-decade-long occupation of Azerbaijan's territories. On the contrary,



Armenia has become a failed state, as I had emphasized in my statement at the UN General Assembly in 2017. The country has been weakened to the extent that it cannot even guard its own borders by itself.

"Azerbaijanophobia" promoted by the government is on the rise in Armenia. Racist ideology cultivated in Armenian society based on ethnic hatred and demonization is the root cause of ethnic cleansing and unprecedented vandalism in the formerly occupied lands of Azerbaijan by Armenia.

Despite the regime change in Armenia, the fascist ideology continues to dominate in the country. Successive Armenian governments have glorified Nazism in the person of Nazi general Garegin Nzhdeh who has been turned into "national hero" in Armenia. While the progressive world is fighting against the rise of neo-fascism, the then president of Armenia inaugurated the monument of Garegin Nzhdeh in capital Yerevan in 2016. Azerbaijan defeated not only Armenian occupying forces, but also Armenian fascism. If we see again any danger to our sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of our people we will exercise our legitimate right to self-defence without any hesitation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we have left the conflict behind, large-scale construction work is carried out in the liberated territories. Azerbaijan is building new cities and towns from the scratch by applying the modern urban planning and utilizing the concepts of "smart city" and "smart village". All this work is being conducted with Azerbaijan's own financial resources. To that end, \$1.3 billion has been allocated from the state budget only this year.

However, the main challenge is the vast presence of landmines planted by Armenia in the liberated territories. Since the signing of the capitulation act by Armenia on 10 November 2020, around 30 Azerbaijani citizens, including 2 journalists were killed and around 130 citizens were wounded. Azerbaijan is among the most heavily mined countries in the world. It slows down the reconstruction process in the liberated territories and return of internally displaced persons to their homes.

Armenia refuses to release accurate maps of minefields. The accuracy level of the maps for three regions which Armenia had to provide is only 25 percent. The international community must force Armenia to provide us with accurate mine maps of all liberated territories.

As the conflict is over, Azerbaijan has already announced its readiness to embark upon the border delimitation and demarcation between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and to start negotiations on peace agreement with Armenia, based on mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other. Such an agreement would turn our region into the region of peace and cooperation. However, we have not yet seen any positive reaction from Armenia regarding our proposal. One of the areas that can serve as the cause of peace and cooperation is transportation projects. In this context, the Zangazur corridor connecting mainland Azerbaijan with its inseparable part Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Turkey will create new opportunities for our region.

Azerbaijan has created a new reality in the Southern Caucasus region which has to be taken into account by all. Armenia has to make a choice between regional cooperation and illegal and baseless territorial claims against its neighbours. The international community should also play its

positive role in this regard and urge Armenia to realize that peace has no alternative. Any acts directly or indirectly supporting revanchism and militarization in Armenia must be ceased.

We hope that long-awaited peace, security and stability will prevail in the Southern Caucasus, at last. Azerbaijan will continue its consistent efforts to contribute and to strengthen regional peace and development.

Thank you.



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## NOTES

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