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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 30 June 2020 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has the honour to transmit herewith the comment issued by the Foreign Ministry of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (Republic of Artsakh) on the twenty-ninth anniversary of Operation *Koltso* (“ring”) aimed at the deportation of the Armenian population from the border villages of Artsakh (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Armenia kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto* as a document of the forty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, under agenda item 4.

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.



Annex to the note verbale dated 30 June 2020 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Comment by the Artsakh Foreign Ministry dated 30 April 2020 on the 29th Anniversary of the Operation ‘Koltso’ (‘Ring’) aimed at the Deportation of the Armenian Population of the Borderline Villages of Artsakh

29 years ago, under the direct organization and coordination of the central authorities of the USSR and Azerbaijan, a large-scale operation ‘Koltso’ (‘Ring’) was carried out to deport the Armenian population of the borderline villages of Artsakh. This bloody operation ultimately transferred the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict to the military plane, initiating the subsequent full-scale aggression of Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic).

On April 30, 1991, the massive shelling of Getashen and Martunashen villages of the Shahumyan region launched the operation ‘Koltso’, in the course of which tanks, combat helicopters, and artillery were employed for the first time against the civilians. Azerbaijani special police units (OMON), with the support of internal troops of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Soviet Army, broke into Armenian villages formally supposedly for "checking the passport regime", but in fact for killing, robbery, terror against the Armenian population, followed by deportation.

As a result of the military-police actions, dozens of Armenian villages of Northern Artsakh, as well as the Shahumyan, Hadrut and Shushi regions were destroyed, about ten thousand people were deported, over 100 people were killed, and hundreds of people were taken hostage. The fate of many of them remains unknown so far.

The Azerbaijani authorities considered the operation ‘Koltso’ as the beginning of the complete cleansing of Artsakh from the Armenian population. It became another manifestation of the policy of ethnic cleansing conducted by Azerbaijan in 1988-1991 in Sumgait, Baku and other settlements of the Azerbaijani SSR, as well as in the villages of Northern Artsakh.

The Armenian pogroms carried out by the Azerbaijani authorities in response to the demand of the people of Artsakh to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and the subsequent military aggression against the Republic of Artsakh in 1991, which was repeated in April 2016, demonstrated that only the establishment and strengthening of an independent statehood can ensure the right of the people of Artsakh to live freely and safely in its homeland. The international community’s recognition of this reality and the international recognition of the Republic of Artsakh will become an additional deterrent against Azerbaijan’s desire to unleash a new war and will ensure peace and security in the entire region of the South Caucasus.
