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Prevention of armed conflict

Right of peoples to self-determination

**The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide,
war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity**

**Letter dated 27 September 2020 from the Permanent Representative
of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a letter from Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, regarding the large-scale military offensive launched by the Azerbaijani armed forces against Nagorno-Karabakh on 27 September 2020 (see annex).

I kindly request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 34, 71 and 135, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mher **Margaryan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 27 September 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Excellency,

On 27 September, Azerbaijani armed forces launched large-scale airborne, missile, and land attack along the entire line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, targeting civilian settlements, infrastructure, and schools, including in the capital city of Stepanakert. There were also casualties among civilians: a woman and a child were killed during the very first strikes.

The aggression was well-prepared and any reference by the Azerbaijani side to an alleged “counterattack” is utterly deceptive. The offensive was militarily pre-planned well in advance. Azerbaijan has never made secret of its strategic goal to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by using force and, thus, has been maintaining the tension high across both the line of contact and the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border. In April 2016 and in July 2020, these aggressive acts of Azerbaijan resulted in major escalations.

After the July offensive against the Armenia proper, Azerbaijan has been consistently preparing for a new cycle of escalation. Azerbaijan has closed down the transit air corridors for the past two months, despite the absence of any threat to civilian air traffic. On the state borders of Armenia, as well as along the line of contact, Turkey and Azerbaijan have been carrying out provocative flights. Since 21 September, Azerbaijan began drafting reservists and confiscating civilian trucks for military needs. Moreover, on 25 September, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence rejected the request of the OSCE monitors to conduct ceasefire monitoring along the line of contact.

There have been credible reports of recruiting foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from the parts of Syria presently under the control of the Turkish military, to be used in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

From early morning on 27 September, the Azerbaijani authorities blocked social networks and media outlets. The Turkish media representatives have been present in the conflict zone from the outset of the attack.

The preparation to this aggression was accompanied by large-scale military exercises conducted by Azerbaijan and Turkey. From 29 July to 10 August, large-scale Azerbaijan-Turkey joint military exercises were held in Baku, Nakhichevan, Ganja, Kurdamir and Yevlakh. The exercises involved thousands of military personnel, hundreds of armoured combat vehicles, artillery and military aviation, including UAVs.

It is a source of grave concern that, after the military exercise, Turkish military personnel and equipment remained stationed in Azerbaijan. Since the July aggression of Azerbaijan on the state border with Armenia, Turkey has been openly supporting Azerbaijan’s military activities against Armenia and encouraging the use of force. On 27 September, shortly after the start of the Azerbaijani large-scale military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey, once again, unilaterally and unreservedly supported Azerbaijan.

The opening of the general debate of the UN General Assembly was meant to be an opportunity for the world leaders to address the most pressing global challenges and to share ideas and visions on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. The President of Azerbaijan, however, chose to hijack the celebration by

turning it into a platform to channel hatred and Armenophobia, in full demonstration of a clear and detectable early warning sign.

For decades, Armenia and the Armenians have been useful enemies for the leadership of Azerbaijan to justify the low living standards, the absence of democracy, and systematic violations of human rights in their country. Today, the authorities of Azerbaijan have achieved the establishment of a repressive regime, who have been instrumentalizing the conflict and the pandemic to harass and silence its people.

Armenia strongly condemns the aggression by Azerbaijan, whose pervasive record of ceasefire violations and military provocations, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, demonstrates a most dangerous and irresponsible intention to instigate a large-scale war in the region.

Armenia remains committed to supporting your appeal for immediate global ceasefire, as expressed in my letter to you dated 10 April 2020. In these challenging times for humanity, the COVID-19 pandemic calls for the global imperative of solidarity, dialogue and restraint. Adherence to ceasefire requires full and unconditional commitment by all parties to the conflict. Azerbaijan's continued attempts to use force against the people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh come to clearly demonstrate why this particular member state has chosen not to join this crucial peaceful initiative, which Armenia supported in good faith from the very start, in sharp contrast with Azerbaijan. The political-military leadership of Azerbaijan bears full responsibility for the consequences of their aggression, which is incompatible with the international law and the core values of humanity and, as such, represents a serious challenge to regional peace and stability.

As a security guarantor of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia will take all the necessary measures to protect their inalienable human rights and to deliver proportionate response to the aggressor. The right of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to live in safety and dignity, free from fears and coercion, will not be compromised under any circumstances. The right of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh for self-determination is an integral part of the conflict settlement, and, as such, is fully acknowledged by the international community. By virtue of this right, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh should be able to determine their status without limitation.

Armenia is committed to the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and appreciates the firm support of the international community, the United Nations and that of yours, Secretary-General, to the peaceful resolution of the conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

(Signed) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**