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**QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL  
FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD**

**Letter dated 31 March 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent  
Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to  
the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights**

I have the honour to transmit to you the press release of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan of 31 March 2003 concerning the day of genocide of Azerbaijanis.

I would highly appreciate the circulation of the present letter and the attached information\* as an official document of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 9.

*(Signed):* Murad N. NAJAFOV  
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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

Annex

## **P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

### **AZERBAIJAN COMMEMORATES THE DAY OF GENOCIDE OF AZERBAIJANIS**

According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan of 26 March 1998, every year on 31 March Azerbaijan commemorates the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis.

This year the people of Azerbaijan once again pay their respect to victims of massacres and ethnic cleansing conducted as a result of imperial policies in the region and waves of Armenian aggression.

The dismemberment of the Azerbaijani people and the division of the historical lands of Azerbaijan began with the Treaties of Gyulistan and Turkmanchai, signed in 1813 and 1828. The national tragedy of the divided Azerbaijani people continued with occupation of their lands. As a result of the implementation of this policy, a very rapid mass resettlement of Armenians in Azerbaijani lands took place. The policy of genocide became an integral part of the occupation of Azerbaijani lands.

Inspired by dreams of creating a "Greater Armenia", Armenians, not even concealing their intentions, carried out a series of large-scale bloody actions against Azerbaijanis between 1905 and 1907. Hundreds of settlements were destroyed and razed to the ground, the thousands of Azerbaijanis were barbarically killed.

Taking advantage of the situation followed the World War I and the February and October 1917 Revolutions in Russia, Armenians began to pursue the implementation of their plans under the banner of Bolshevism. Under the watchword of combating counter-revolutionary elements, in March 1918 the Baku Commune began to implement a criminal plan aimed at eliminating Azerbaijanis from the whole of Baku Province. The crimes perpetrated by Armenians in those days have imprinted themselves forever in the memory of the Azerbaijani people. Solely because of their ethnic affiliation, thousands of peaceful Azerbaijanis were annihilated. The Armenians set fire to homes and burned people alive. They destroyed national architectural treasures, schools, hospitals, mosques and other facilities, and left the greater part of Baku in ruins.

The genocide of the Azerbaijanis was carried out with particular cruelty in Baku, Shemakha and Guba districts and in the Karabakh, Zangazur, Nakhichevan, Lenkoran and other regions of Azerbaijan. In these areas, the civilian population was exterminated, with villages put to the torch and national cultural monuments ruined and destroyed.

After the proclamation of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, the events of March 1918 were at the center of attention. In 1919 and 1920 the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic observed 31 March as a national day of mourning. This was in fact the first attempt to give a political assessment of the policy of genocide against Azerbaijanis. However, the demise of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic left this work unfinished.

In 1920, taking advantage of the sovietization of Transcaucasia for their own vile purposes, the Armenians declared Zangazur and a number of Azerbaijani districts as a territory of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.

On 23 December 1947 the Armenians secured the adoption of a special decision by the Council of Ministers of the USSR on the resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenian SSR to the Azerbaijani SSR, and between 1948 and 1953 they were able to have mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical lands conducted at the State level.

Beginning in the 1950<sup>th</sup>, the Armenian nationalists, with the help of their protectors, initiated a flagrant campaign of intellectual aggression against the Azerbaijani people. In books, magazines and newspapers they sought to prove that the most treasured masterpieces of the national culture of the Azerbaijanis, their classical heritage and architectural monuments belonged to Armenians.

Hundreds of Azerbaijanis were driven from the city of Erevan and other districts of the Armenian SSR. Armenians grossly violated the rights of Azerbaijanis, made it difficult for them to be educated in their mother tongue, and pursued a policy of repression. The historical names of Azerbaijani villages were changed; old toponyms were replaced with modern names on a scale unprecedented in the history of toponymy.

The new territorial claims of Armenia towards Azerbaijan instigated by the leadership of USSR, at the end of 80s of the last century resulted in a large-scale war, occupation of 20 percent of territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan by the Armenian military units, and becoming refugees and internally displaced persons of about one million of Azerbaijanis.

In 1988, the remaining 200,000 Azerbaijanis were forcibly deported from their historical homelands within the present-day Armenian State. Killings and maimings accompanied the mass expulsion: 216 Azerbaijanis were killed during the ethnic cleansing in 1988-1989.

In February 1992, the Armenians committed unprecedented massacre of the population of the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly. The bloody tragedy, which became known as the Khojaly Genocide, resulted in extermination or capture of thousands of Azerbaijanis; the town was razed to the ground. That tragic action by its scale and features is in full conformity with the notion of genocide defined by provisions set forth in the Convention "On Prevention and Punishment of Crime of Genocide" adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution 260 (III) dated December 9, 1948.

All of Azerbaijan's tragedies that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were accompanied by the seizure of lands constituted various stages in the Armenia's deliberate and systematic policy of genocide against Azerbaijanis.

Addressing the nation on the occasion of the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis, President Aliyev stated, "...In contrast to the aggressive Armenian nationalists who unceasingly declare to the world about the pseudo-genocide and use it for the purpose of getting political-financial dividends and to achieve some "compensations" we do not follow such kind of aims informing the world about the truth of the genocide of Azerbaijanis. We consider that in the modern world territorial claims against another state, ideology of hate against the whole nations, attempts to solve the arguable issues between the states and peoples by military means are inadmissible. At the same time, the whole world should know the truth about the real genocide..."

Geneva, 31 March 2003