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100th Anniversary of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis

On 26 March 1998, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed a Decree on the Genocide of Azerbaijanis. Since then the 31st of March is commemorated as the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis, in memory of those thousands of civilians killed as a result of Armenian offensives in 1918.

As is well-known, the transfer of the Armenians to the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and the broader South Caucasus as part of the implementation of the tsarist colonial policy aimed at altering the demographic and territorial structure that existed at the time started in the nineteenth century.

Imposed demographic changes have laid the basis for long-term instability, tensions and conflicts in the region that continue to date and have been accompanied by massacres and forcible deportations of the Azerbaijani population.

The hostilities of 1905 and 1918 claimed the lives of thousands of people, and hundreds of settlements were destroyed. The atrocities committed by the Armenians began in Baku and then extended over the whole of Azerbaijan, including the Azerbaijani populated areas in the territory of present-day Armenia.

Taking advantage of the situation following the First World War and the February and October 1917 revolutions in Russia, the Armenians began to pursue the implementation of their plans under the banner of Bolshevism. Thus, under the watchword of combating counter-revolutionary elements, in March 1918 thousands of Azerbaijanis were murdered in Baku, as well as in the Shamakhy and Guba districts, Karabakh, Zangazur, Nakhchyvan, Lankaran and other parts of Azerbaijan. In these areas, the civilian population was exterminated en masse, villages were burned and national cultural monuments were destroyed and obliterated.

During the construction of a stadium in the Guba district of Azerbaijan in April 2007, a mass grave was discovered, containing the remains of hundreds of people executed at that time, reminding of horrifying atrocities against the Azerbaijanis of not so distant past.

On 30 March 2018, the Parliament of Azerbaijan adopted a statement, appealing to the international community to recognize the genocide of Azerbaijanis and support the resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan within the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Armenia's actions were never peaceful in the past, nor were they peaceful at the end of 1980s, when Armenia resorted to force and violence in an attempt to realize its groundless and illegal territorial claims. Those actions started with the attacks on the Azerbaijani population both in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and in Armenia itself and culminated in brutal killings of thousands of Azerbaijani civilians, the expulsion of about 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes in both Armenia and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the extensive destruction and pillaging of the seized areas.

The unlawful presence of the armed forces of Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is the main cause of tensions and incidents that lead to human losses and sufferings in the conflict zone and the major impediment to the political settlement of the conflict.

The only way to achieve a durable and lasting solution is to ensure the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and from other occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the realization by the forcibly displaced population of their inalienable right of return to their homes and properties.

It is important that the international community remember what happened in the past and unequivocally reject denial by Yerevan of its responsibility for waging war and committing the most serious international crimes.