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**Press release
on the occasion of the 28th anniversary of the Khojaly Genocide**

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The ongoing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan began at the end of 1987 with the former's unlawful and groundless territorial claims on the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous oblast of Azerbaijan. Those claims marked the beginning of the assaults on the Azerbaijanis in and their expulsion from the autonomous oblast and Armenia itself.

At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, Armenia unleashed full-scale war against Azerbaijan. As a result, a part of the territory of Azerbaijan, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the seven surrounding districts, was occupied by Armenia. The war claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people and ruined cities, towns and villages; thousands of people went missing in connection with the conflict; and all captured areas were ethnically cleansed of their Azerbaijani population. Some of these acts that constitute war crimes also amount to the crime of genocide, as ethnic Azerbaijanis have been targeted because of their nationality and/or ethnicity, and the relevant intent has been to destroy the group in part.

Twenty-eighth years ago, the largest massacre during the conflict was committed against the civilians and defenders of the town of Khojaly, in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

Before the conflict, 7,000 people had lived in this town. From October 1991, the town was entirely surrounded by Armenian forces. Throughout the winter of 1991–1992 the town was shelled on an almost daily basis, including in attacks that were either indiscriminate or directly aimed at civilian targets. Over the night of 25–26 February 1992, following heavy bombardment, the town was overrun from various directions. The assault was carried out by Armenian armed forces, with the assistance of the infantry guards regiment No. 366 of the former USSR. As a result of the attack and capture of the town, hundreds of Azerbaijanis, including women, children and the elderly, were killed, wounded or taken hostage, while the town was razed to the ground.

There are abundant sources, consisting, *inter alia*, of the documents of international organizations and the findings of independent investigations by foreign journalists, human rights activists and international non-governmental organizations, which contribute to corroborating the facts on the ground.

International media, such as The Washington Post, The Washington Times, The New York Times, The Boston Globe, Los Angeles Times, The Times, The Sunday Times, Newsweek, The Irish Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Age (Australia), Milliyet (Turkey), Komsomolskaya Pravda (Russia), Pravda (Russia), Trud (Russia), and human rights non-governmental organizations, such as the Human Rights Watch and Memorial, reported with horror the killing of residents and defenders of Khojaly by direct attacks, indiscriminate gunfire and other brutal acts.

International organizations and the European Court of Human Rights have recognized the gravity of the atrocity in Khojaly. In a declaration on 11 March 1992 — just weeks after the massacre — the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued a declaration in which it expressed deep concern “about recent reports of indiscriminate killings and outrages” in Azerbaijan and firmly condemned “the violence and attacks directed against the civilian populations in the Nagorno Karabakh area of the Azerbaijan Republic”. The European Court of Human Rights has concluded that the massacre in Khojaly involved “acts of particular gravity which may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity”. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has called for international and national recognition of what it has described as the “mass massacre of Azerbaijani civilians perpetrated by the Armenian armed forces in the town of Khojaly” as a “genocidal act” and a “crime against humanity”.

The parliaments of fifteen countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Jordan, Mexico, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Slovenia, The Sudan), twenty two states in the United States of America (State of Arizona, State of Arkansas, State of Connecticut, State of Georgia, State of Hawaii, State of Idaho, State of Indiana, State of Maine, State of Massachusetts, State of Minnesota, State of Mississippi, State of Montana, State of Nebraska, State of New Jersey, State of New Mexico, State of Oklahoma, State of Pennsylvania, State of Tennessee, State of Texas, State of Utah, State of West Virginia, State of Wisconsin) and the Scottish Parliament adopted special resolutions, condemning in the strongest terms the massacre in Khojaly and honouring the victims of the tragedy.

The crimes committed in Khojaly were not an isolated or sporadic act, but an integral part of Armenia’s widespread and systematic policy and practice. Azerbaijani civilians in many other villages and cities of the country were subjected to similar atrocities by Armenian forces. The recently published comprehensive report on war crimes in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia’s responsibility provides convincing evidence as to the range, variety and consistency of Armenia’s violations of international humanitarian law and the commission of multiple war crimes for which Armenia bears liability under international law and which also incur individual criminal responsibility.

On 8 May 2008, the “Justice for Khojaly” international awareness campaign was launched to increase public knowledge about Khojaly, especially among the youth, express solidarity with the victims and support the survivors, as well as to mobilize the public in rejecting massacres, ethnic cleansing and discrimination on racial, ethnic or religious grounds. To date, hundreds of thousands of people and hundreds organizations from various countries have joined the Campaign. Social networks, exhibitions, rallies, contests, conferences, seminars, publications and other public and academic activities are among the tools used by the Campaign to promote its objectives (for more information about the Campaign, see www.justiceforkhojaly.org). On the occasion of the 28th anniversary of the Khojaly Genocide, the video and printed materials were released in the framework of the “Justice for Khojaly” international awareness campaign, which are available at the following links:

<https://youtu.be/t0H3TJchQ4U>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ErCjw1niCxkNeMmOTiz08ILexWYMz2x5>