



**THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
TO THE UNITED NATION**

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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Yashar Aliyev
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations
at the Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict**

2 August 2019

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Poland on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and commend its initiative to convene today's important open debate on children and armed conflict.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, as well as to the 1949 Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims. My Government has strongly and consistently supported international efforts aimed at ensuring more effective protection for the rights of children and improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

Despite some progress made at the international, regional and national levels in preventing and responding to grave violations committed against children, serious challenges remain. According to the report of the Secretary-General, “[v]erified cases of the killing and maiming of children reached record levels globally since the creation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005)” (*A/73/907–S/2019/509, para. 6*).

Effective protection efforts must be free of selectivity and must address all situations of armed conflict without distinction, including those of a protracted nature and prolonged impact on civilians and children, in particular. The wrongs of the recent past, including attacks on schools and hospitals, the killing and maiming of children, forced displacements and the abduction of children, must not be neglected.

During the continued aggression by the Republic of Armenia against my country, serious violations of international humanitarian law have been committed, amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. A scorched-earth policy implemented by the Armenian side involved the ethnic cleansing of the seized territories of all Azerbaijanis and the brutal killing or wounding of thousands of civilians, including children. Over more than thirty years, Azerbaijan has hosted one of the highest numbers of refugees and displaced persons in the world, many of whom are children.

In February 1992, the largest massacre during the conflict was committed against the civilians of the town of Khojaly, in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. As a result of the attack and capture of the town by the Armenian armed forces, hundreds of Azerbaijanis, including women, children and the elderly, were killed, wounded or taken hostage, while the town was razed to the ground.

As a result of the war waged against my country, 3,888 citizens of Azerbaijan were registered missing, including 718 civilians, of whom 71 are children. Those reported missing disappeared in circumstances raising serious concern as to their well-being, particularly given the atrocious methods of warfare widely practised by the Armenian side during the conflict. Yerevan refuses to account for the missing persons within its control, as well as to conduct a prompt and effective investigation into their fate.

Despite the formal ceasefire, the Armenian armed forces have repeatedly targeted civilians and civilian objects in Azerbaijan, situated along or further behind the frontline. Thus, as a result of heavy shelling in April 2016, many schools in the Goranboy, Tartar, Aghdam and Aghjebedi districts of Azerbaijan were damaged. That was verified in the assessment report of 15 May 2016 released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees following its mission to the affected areas of Azerbaijan.

Under international law, intentionally directing attacks on buildings dedicated to education is a war crime. It should also be noted that attacks on schools and hospitals constitute one of the grave violations that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict is mandated to monitor and report on.

In order to break the cycles of violence and to aid prevention efforts, respect for international humanitarian law is imperative, and impunity must end. Being an inevitable consequence of the offences committed, accountability is an important prerequisite on the path to peace and long-lasting reconciliation.

Thank you.