



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

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**Statement by Mr. Tofiq F. Musayev
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in the exercise of the first right of reply to the statement by the representative of Armenia

**at the Sixth Committee of the seventy-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly
under agenda item 83: "Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and
Relating to the Protection of Victims of Armed Conflicts"**

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Armenia has once again demonstrated that its leading position in falsifications and hypocrisy is well-deserved and incontestable.

Generally speaking, it is curious that Armenia – a country which bears responsibility for unleashing the war against Azerbaijan, carrying out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale, committing other heinous crimes during the conflict, advocating undisguised racist ideology and disregarding the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council – has the cheek to lecture others on international humanitarian law.

As to the offences committed between 1992 and 2019, the comprehensive report on war crimes in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and Armenia's responsibility, published earlier this year as document of the General Assembly and the Security Council A/74/676-S/2020/90, provides convincing evidence as to the range, variety and consistency of Armenia's commission of multiple war crimes, including those relating to civilian deaths or injuries; civilian property; the mistreatment of detainees and prisoners of war; the taking of hostages; ethnic cleansing, forced displacement and changing the character of the occupied territory; the destruction of cultural heritage; and damage to the natural environment. Some of the offences examined in the report 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.

Similarly to its barbaric actions during the active phase of the conflict in the early 1990s, Armenia deliberately employs atrocity methods of warfare in the course of ongoing hostilities, evidenced in the systemic targeting of the densely populated areas of Azerbaijan.

Despite the humanitarian ceasefire, missile and artillery attacks by the armed forces of Armenia against the cities, towns and villages in Azerbaijan continue to date. These attacks are aimed at murdering of civilians and causing disproportionate harm to civilian infrastructure, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

Barbaric and coward strikes on the Ganja and Barda cities, which are located far away from the area of active hostilities, must be particularly mentioned.

Ganja, the second largest and densely populated city of Azerbaijan has been hit three times. The attacks on 11 and 17 October were launched from the territory of Armenia in the night hours with the use of SCUD ballistic missiles, causing the death of 25 civilians and injuring more than 84 civilians.

On 28 October 2020, the attack on the city center of Barda with Smerch multiple-launch rocket systems has claimed the lives of 21 civilians and injured more than 70 civilians. In her statement two days ago, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet characterized civilian casualties in Barda as “[t]he biggest single loss of life”.

In total, since 27 September 2020, as a result of direct and indiscriminate attacks of the armed forces of Armenia, 91 civilians, including 11 children, had been killed, more than 450 civilians had been wounded and some 2734 private houses, 98 apartment buildings and 500 other civilian objects, including schools, kindergartens, hospitals, religious sites and cultural monuments, had been either destroyed or damaged.

The use by Armenia of the prohibited cluster munitions has been verified by the United Nations and reputable international non-governmental organizations. Armenia has also used the prohibited white phosphorus projectiles against the populated areas in Azerbaijan and in the Shusha forests.

In response to the new act of aggression, Azerbaijan has undertaken and successfully continues counter-offensive measures, in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defence. Azerbaijan acts exclusively on its sovereign soil to defend its civilian population, liberate the occupied territories from aggressors and terrorists and allow more than 700 thousand internally displaced persons to return to their homes and properties.

The so-called evidence that Armenia is disseminating to blame Azerbaijan for alleged violations of international humanitarian law is simply a fabrication. Even the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in her aforementioned statement admitted that many faked images had been circulating on social media.

As has been repeatedly stated by the Government of Azerbaijan, the armed forces of Azerbaijan strictly adhere to the principle of distinction and do not target civilian objects unless they are used for military purposes. On multiple occasions, appeals were issued to civilians living in the area of active military hostilities, calling them not to take arms and stay away from military actions, military facilities and military infrastructure of the armed forces of Armenia.

In contrast, the information that has recently been published and widely disseminated in social media shows that Armenia employs even child soldiers and uses kindergartens and school buildings for military purposes, in grave violation of the rights of children and international humanitarian law.

It is abundantly clear that the purpose of Armenia’s fabrications and disinformation is to divert attention from own aggression and crimes, justify heavy losses inflicted on its armed forces on the battlefield and mislead the international community.

Armenia must be brought to account for the heinous crimes it has committed in the course of the war and forced to comply with its international obligations.