



**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**

23 June 2020

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of France for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict.

Despite some progress made in preventing and responding to grave violations committed against children, serious challenges remain. Effective protection efforts must be free of selectivity and must address all situations of armed conflict without distinction, including those of a protracted nature. 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 Armenia against Azerbaijan, serious violations of international humanitarian law have been committed. 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. To give a sense of the scale of the devastation caused by the aggression, more than 900 settlements, 150,000 homes, 693 secondary schools and 855 pre-schools have been looted, plundered and destroyed in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Following the establishment of a formal ceasefire in 1994, the Armenian armed forces have continued to target the densely populated areas in Azerbaijan, situated along or further behind the frontline, causing casualties among civilians and destroying civilian objects, including residences, schools and kindergartens.

Besides, as at the beginning of 2020, 3,889 citizens of Azerbaijan were registered as missing as a result of the conflict, including 719 civilians. Among the civilians, 71 are children. It has been established that 871 of the 3,889 missing persons were either taken as prisoners of war or hostages, including 267 civilians, of whom 29 are children. Armenia is in breach of international law for refusing to account for the missing persons within its control, as well as for refusing to conduct a prompt and effective investigation into their fate.

The recently published comprehensive report on war crimes in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and Armenia's responsibility (A/74/676-S/2020/90) provides the convincing evidence as to the range, variety and consistency of Armenia's commission of multiple war crimes. 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. The facts contained in the report necessitate prompt action by the United Nations and the international community as a whole to ensure accountability, in accordance with the international law of State responsibility and international criminal law.

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.