



**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 64th plenary meeting of the General Assembly on agenda item 135 “The
responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic
cleansing and crimes against humanity”**

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Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to thank you for convening this meeting and the Secretary-General for presenting his report on the topic (A/75/863–S/2021/424).

As the report acknowledges, the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity remains a constant global challenge and an ongoing imperative. Although international norms and standards, along with institutional activities, have significantly developed over the years, efforts towards the protection and vindication of rights and the prevention and punishment of international crimes have not always been consistent and successful.

The lack of political will and notorious double standards should definitely be mentioned among the primary reasons of the continued gap between the commitment to the responsibility to protect and the commission of atrocity crimes.

Further, in that context, prioritization of prevention and effective response to atrocity crimes require that the intentions of those speculating on the sensitive domain of criminal justice to falsify history, sow dissension and conceal their own responsibility for the most serious crimes never succeed.

Mr. President,

In the early 1990s, Armenia unleashed a full-scale war against Azerbaijan. As a result, a significant part of the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan was seized and remained under occupation for almost thirty years. The war claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, and all captured areas were ethnically cleansed of their more than 700,000 Azerbaijani population. Most of the occupied cities, towns and villages were razed to the ground. Some of these acts, which constitute war crimes, also amount to crimes against humanity and acts of genocide, as they were part of a widespread and systematic policy and practice aimed at killing Azerbaijanis and also at forcing them to leave their homes and properties.

The scale of the violations is evidenced by about 4000 citizens of Azerbaijan went missing in connection with the conflict. Armenia refuses to account for the missing persons and to conduct investigations into their fate.

In 1993, in response to the continued acts of Armenian aggression, the Security Council adopted four resolutions – 822, 853, 874 and 884 – condemning the use of force against Azerbaijan, the occupation of its territories and attacks on civilians and bombardment of inhabited areas, reaffirming respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory and demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

However, key demands contained in those resolutions were not implemented by Armenia and the mediation efforts conducted within the framework of the OSCE yielded no results.

Moreover, numerous appeals by Azerbaijan on the need to ensure accountability for atrocity crimes committed by Armenia in the course of the conflict remained a voice in the wilderness. Likewise, our calls in relation to the rights of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis uprooted from their homes, the illegal settlement practices and systematic destruction of our cultural heritage in the occupied territories faced with indifference of those who loudly position themselves as true defenders of human rights and humanitarian law.

On the contrary, their attempts to maintain “a reasonable balance”, instead of calling a spade a spade, and manifest selectivity with regard to the universally recognized obligations and commitments under international law only encouraged Armenia to continue sticking to its guns and contributed to its sense of permissiveness. Over this period, Armenia repeatedly carried out armed provocations on the ground, which caused numerous casualties among the civilians in my country.

Another act of aggression by Armenia on 27 September 2020 became a logical consequence of the impunity it has enjoyed for more than thirty years. Shelling with prohibited cluster munitions and ballistic missiles of major cities and towns of Azerbaijan located far from the front line where there were no military targets, including in particular a series of ruthless night-time missile strikes on the residential areas in the cities of Ganja and Barda, resulted in the killing of 101 Azerbaijani civilians, including 12 children. Over 400 civilians were wounded, some 84,000 people were forced to leave their homes and almost 5,000 private houses, apartment buildings and other civilian objects were either destroyed or damaged. Even hospitals, medical facilities, ambulances, schools, kindergartens, religious sites, cultural monuments and cemeteries were not spared.

In the course of the combat actions that lasted 44 days, Azerbaijan liberated more than 300 cities, towns and villages from occupation. Acting in full accordance with the inherent right of self-defence under the Charter of the United Nations and customary international law, Azerbaijan has fought within its internationally recognized territory to repulse aggression, end the occupation and protect its people facing the imminent threat of atrocity.

The new realities on the ground deriving from the trilateral agreements of 10 November 2020 and 11 January 2021 offer a unique opportunity for consolidating peace and pave the way for recovery, reconstruction and mutually beneficial cooperation in the region.

However, after the cessation of hostilities, hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians were killed or seriously wounded as a result of mine explosions in the liberated territories. Armenia refuses to release information about the landmines it deployed there, thus deliberately targeting human lives and attempting to impede humanitarian efforts and the safe return of the internally displaced persons to their homes.

Moreover, a worrying level of hatred and Azerbaijanophobia is on the rise in Armenian society. It is disturbing to see that anyone who dares to speak about reconciliation and peaceful coexistence with Azerbaijan is labeled and treated as a “traitor”. Moreover, irresponsible and dangerous revanchist ideas and intolerance are propagated at the State level and shared across the whole political spectrum in Armenia.

Armenia must come to terms with its glaring misdeeds and realize that the objectives of durable and lasting peace and stability can in no way be achieved through territorial claims, groundless accusations and animosity towards neighbouring States and peoples and contempt for their legitimate rights to live on their own homeland.

Azerbaijan is confident that there is no alternative to the normalization of inter-State relations between the two countries based on mutual recognition and respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders and is determined to advance the agenda of peacebuilding, reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and development.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to inform of Azerbaijan’s support for draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”.

Thank you.