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**Security Council
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Letter dated 20 May 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In the course of its aggression against Azerbaijan since the early 1990s, Armenia, its agents, officials and those for whom it is directly responsible have committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law, including of the prohibitions on the wilful killing of civilians, on hostage-taking and on the mistreatment of prisoners of war and civilian detainees.¹

One of the tragic consequences of the war demanding close attention and action is the fate of persons who went missing in connection with the conflict. To date, 3,890 citizens of Azerbaijan have been registered as missing, including 719 civilians. Among the civilians, 71 are children, 267 are women and 326 are older persons. A list of missing persons has been submitted to Armenia through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and is regularly updated.

¹ For more information, see the report on war crimes in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia's responsibility, [A/74/676-S/2020/90](#) (7 February 2020), paras. 83–117, 154–160, 166–173, as well as [A/75/660-S/2020/1267](#) (22 December 2020).



Those reported missing disappeared in circumstances that raise serious concern as to their well-being, particularly given the atrocities widely practised by Armenian armed forces during the conflict. Similar to other breaches of international humanitarian law, unlawful detention, torture and outrages on the personal dignity of detainees were part of a systematic policy of ethnic cleansing and collective punishment and discrimination against Azerbaijanis.

Some of the offences committed by Armenian armed forces, such as the brutal killing within a very few hours of hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians in the town of Khojaly in February 1992,² which constitute war crimes, also amount to crimes against humanity and acts of genocide, as ethnic Azerbaijanis were targeted because of their ethnicity, and the relevant intent was to destroy the group in part.

It has been established that, among the missing persons, 872 citizens of Azerbaijan were taken either as prisoners of war or hostages in the early phase of the conflict, including 605 servicemen and 267 civilians, of whom 29 are children, 98 are women and 112 are older persons.

It should be particularly noted that ICRC visited 54 detainees in Armenian custody, but they were thereafter killed between 1993 and 1995. The bodies of only 17 of them were later returned to Azerbaijan, including 12 captives who were held and subsequently killed on the territory of Armenia, namely, in the capital city of Yerevan (10 cases) and the country's Noyemberyan (Taush) district (2 cases). Another 33 detainees were reported dead, but their bodies were not returned, while the fate of 4 people remains unknown.

Armenia is in violation of international law for the killing and mistreatment of civilians and prisoners of war and for failing to investigate these offences and clarify the whereabouts of the missing persons. In a more general context, Armenia denies its responsibility for the aggression it unleashed and for the incalculable human suffering caused, glorifies war criminals and terrorists, propagates hatred and Azerbaijanophobia, hatches revanchist aspirations and threatens to use force again.

Even after the cessation of hostilities on 10 November 2020, Azerbaijani civilians continue to die as a result of mine explosions in the liberated territories. Armenia refuses to release information about the landmines it deployed throughout the area of almost 10,000 km², thus deliberately targeting human lives and attempting to impede humanitarian efforts and the safe return of the internally displaced persons to their homes.

Azerbaijan has initiated judicial proceedings to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of the atrocity crimes, which are not subject to any statutory limitations. While accountability and redress serve to ensure the rights and interests of the victims and must be an inevitable consequence of the offences committed, they are also an essential preventive tool and one of the key prerequisites on the path to genuine reconciliation.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 34, 35, 40, 64, 70, 72, 86 and 135, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

² For more information, see, for example, [A/67/753-S/2013/106](#) (22 February 2013), [A/75/745-S/2021/156](#) (18 February 2021) and [A/75/742-S/2021/279](#) (22 March 2021).