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**Security Council
Seventy-sixth year**

**Letter dated 27 May 2021 from the Permanent Representative of
Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

With its every communication circulated in the United Nations or elsewhere, Armenia continues to demonstrate that her leading position in falsifications is well-deserved and incontestable.

The level of fabrications and manipulations at the State level in Armenia reached such a scale that even social networks had to take down the accounts linked to the Government of Armenia to prevent the dissemination of fake news and false narratives. Thus, in February 2021, Twitter released a press release, stating the following:

Under our platform manipulation policy, we investigated and removed 35 accounts that had ties to the Government of Armenia. These accounts were created in order to advance narratives that were targeting Azerbaijan and were geostrategically favourable to the Armenian Government. In some cases, the fake accounts purported to represent government and political figures in



Azerbaijan, as well as news entities claiming to operate in Azerbaijan. The accounts engaged in spammy activity to gain followers and further amplify this narrative.¹

The letter from the Permanent Representative of Armenia dated 3 May and its annexed memorandum on the so-called “Armenian cultural heritage” (A/75/870-S/2021/427) are yet another striking example of attempts to mislead the international community by means of utter falsehood and smear campaign against Azerbaijan. While rejecting these papers in their entirety, we submit the following observations.

Evidently, Armenia has yet to realize that human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal and embrace all humanity, and respect for these rights must be accorded on an equal and non-discriminatory basis.

Thus, by attempting to blame multi-ethnic Azerbaijan for alleged prosecution of minorities, Armenia ignores the simple fact that, unlike other countries in the South Caucuses and across the globe, she is uniquely mono-ethnic. The causes of such an unsightly situation should be sought in the State policy of intolerance and discrimination, manifested in the forcing out of all non-Armenians on ethnic and religious grounds.

There were over half a million Azerbaijanis living in the Azerbaijani Khanate of Iravan in the territory of present-day Armenia until the establishment of Soviet rule in the region in 1920s. Afterwards, most of them were driven from their ancestral lands. In the late 1980s, the remaining more than 200,000 Azerbaijanis were expelled from Armenia. Many innocent people were killed or brutally beaten, and their property seized, during forcible deportation. The Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage has been consistently and deliberately eradicated in Armenia. Those monuments, buildings and religious sites that survived until the late 1980s have since been destroyed or subjected to the so-called “reconstruction” in such a way as to alter their Azerbaijani authenticity. All Azerbaijani historical localities were renamed throughout Armenia, and all Azerbaijani cemeteries in that country were destroyed and desecrated.

That it is a pattern was evidenced subsequently in the same deliberate policy and practice applied by Armenia to the territories of Azerbaijan in the course of almost 30 years of their occupation.

The aforementioned memorandum clearly reflects Armenia’s distorted understanding of international law and the commonly agreed values. While this document is presented as allegedly belonging to the Armenian National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and frequently refers to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, it seems the authors are unaware of the scope of the application of the Convention and the meaning of the specific terms and definitions contained therein.

It is pertinent to recall that, as defined in article 1 of the 1954 Hague Convention, the term “cultural property” means all property of great importance to particular State’s cultural heritage. Examples of the sorts of property that can be considered cultural property are provided in the same article of the Convention.

As the UNESCO *Protection of Cultural Property: Military Manual* clarifies:

Whether a specific object, structure or site is of such importance is first and foremost a question for the state in whose territory it is situated. If this state, in

¹ See https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2021/disclosing-networks-of-state-linked-information-operations-.html.

good faith, considers given movable or immovable property to be of great importance to its cultural heritage, the property is “cultural property”.²

Under article 8 of the 1954 Hague Convention, a limited number of refuges for sheltering movable cultural property of a worldwide importance may be placed under so-called “special protection”, which is granted to such property by its entry on the International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection maintained, in accordance with the Hague Convention, by the Director General of UNESCO.³

Furthermore, in accordance with the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention, a select range of “cultural heritage of the greatest importance to humanity” may, under certain conditions and on the basis of a decision ultimately taken by the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, be placed under a special regime of what is called “enhanced protection”. Cultural property is granted enhanced protection through its entry on what is referred to as the International List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection.⁴

A number of points arise from the above-mentioned provisions in the context of Armenia’s unfounded and fabricated claims.

First, in contrast to Armenia, which makes no reference in its memorandum to the relevant instruments of international humanitarian law, which had applied alongside the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols during the whole period of the conflict and occupation of the territories of my country, Azerbaijan was strongly committed to the protection of civilian objects, even if they were not “cultural property” in the formal sense.

Second, whatever their designation, a number of objects referred to in Armenia’s memorandum definitely do not fall within the definition of “cultural property” under the 1954 Hague Convention, nor do they enjoy protection under international humanitarian law. Some of those objects were erected in the territories of Azerbaijan, after their occupation by Armenia in the early 1990s, to symbolize the colonization and annexationist policy, falsify history and disseminate hatred on ethnic and religious grounds.

Suffice it to mention the construction of a chapel in the Jabrayil district of Azerbaijan in 2017, in clear violation of international law. It is a well-known fact that the Armenians had never lived in that district prior to its occupation in 1993 and that the chapel was constructed in the military compound to serve only the personnel of the occupying armed forces of Armenia unlawfully deployed in that territory. As Armenian mass media reported in an evidently provocative manner in 2017, the construction of the chapel was supposed to demonstrate that these lands, “where the borders, not only of the country of Armenia, but the entire Christian world, began”, would never be returned to Azerbaijan.⁵ Since its construction, and during the latest hostilities between September and November 2020, the chapel was used for military purposes by the armed forces of Armenia.

Another example of cynicism and insult is the erection, in the Azerbaijani city of Shusha, after its occupation in May 1992, of the statute of Vazgen Sargsyan, the former Minister of Defence and Prime Minister of Armenia in the 1990s, who was previously a field commander responsible for the seizing and ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijani territories and the brutal killings of their civilian residents. However, such barefaced impudence is common in Armenia, where even the statutes of the Nazi

² UNESCO, *Protection of Cultural Property: Military Manual* (Paris, UNESCO; San Remo, Italy, International Institute of Humanitarian Law, 2016), para. 45.

³ *Ibid.*, paras. 50–52 and appendix II.

⁴ *Ibid.*, paras. 53–55, 232–233 and appendix II.

⁵ See, for example, <https://times.am/?p=225557&l=ru>.

collaborators, Garegin Ter-Arutunyan (nicknamed “Nzhdeh”) and Drastamat Kanayan (nicknamed “Dro”), international terrorist Monte Melkonian and other murderers and criminals are considered to be of greatest importance to the country’s cultural heritage. Needless to say, this position is resolutely rejected by international law.

Third, over more than 30 years of conflict and occupation, Armenia not only looted, destroyed and vandalized Azerbaijani cultural heritage in the occupied territories, but also deliberately and purposefully changed the authentic architectural style and unique characteristics of many buildings, as well as cultural and religious sites, to make them look Armenian, including, in particular, the historical Christian churches of Caucasian Albania.⁶

Furthermore, following the occupation of the city of Shusha, the Armenians renamed the Russian Orthodox church of St. John the Baptist “St. Hovhannes Mkrtych Church”, or “Kanach Zham”, altering the appearance of the temple. The Khan’s divan (chancery), which was constructed after the founding of Shusha by Panah Khan of Garabagh as the capital of the Garabagh Khanate in the first half of the 1750s and functioned as a Russian Orthodox church since 1887, suffered the same fate of misappropriation and alterations during the occupation. The Armenians renamed the church the “Ghazanchetsots Cathedral” and, under the pretext of “reconstruction”, changed its architectural structure so that it could appear as an Armenian Gregorian church.

In that context, Armenia passes over in silence the fact that there is an Armenian St. Gregory the Illuminator church in the capital of Azerbaijan, the city of Baku. The Government of Azerbaijan included the church, which was built in 1860s, in the list of immovable historical and cultural monuments of national importance. The church was visited by the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicos Karekin II, and by the parliamentary delegation of Armenia in 2010 and 2012, respectively.

Fourth, unfortunately, falsifications are not limited to the acts described above. As I informed you in my letter dated 4 May 2021 (see [A/75/872–S/2021/429](#)), the territories of Azerbaijan liberated from occupation revealed the traces of “archaeological excavations” and so-called “reconstruction” works, carried out there by Armenia in clear violation of international humanitarian law, the 1954 Hague Convention and its Second Protocol. In the same vein, a modern workshop producing “ancient” *khachkars*, or Armenian cross-stones, was found in the liberated Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan. These *khachkars* were oxidized and treated with vinegar so that they appeared old, then buried as “undeniable” proof of Armenian centuries-long roots in the region.

The Government of Azerbaijan will repair and restore all historical and cultural sites destroyed or damaged during the conflict, without distinction of any kind. These works are underway in the liberated territories, with the participation of experienced specialists and architects.

The falsification and revision of history was an integral part of Armenia’s aggression against Azerbaijan and, along with its distortion and misinterpretation of international law, pursued the objective of removing Azerbaijani cultural and historical roots from the occupied territories and thus promoting its exclusivity and substantiating the policy of territorial expansionism and ethnic cleansing. As Armenia has not yet abandoned these intentions and methods of achieving them, and a

⁶ For more information, see Azerbaijan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Heydar Aliyev Foundation, *War against Azerbaijan: Targeting Cultural Heritage – The Series of “The True Facts about Garabagh”* (Baku, 2007), available at https://mfa.gov.az/files/shares/War_Against_Azerbaijan%20_%20Targeting_Cultural_Heritage.pdf.

worrying level of Azerbaijanophobia is on the rise in Armenian society, she should not forget that it is her reliance on endless impunity that made the heavy defeat of this policy irreversible.

Armenia must come to terms with her glaring misdeeds and realize that the objectives of durable and lasting peace, if she is genuinely interested in it, can in no way be achieved through territorial claims, insults and hatred towards neighbouring States and peoples and contempt for their legitimate rights to live on their own homeland.

We will be stressing, over and over again, that there exists 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. Azerbaijan is determined to advance the agenda of reconciliation, peaceful coexistence, development and cooperation.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 15, 34, 35, 40, 64, 70, 72, 86 and 135, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
