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Agenda items 35, 73, 74, 85 and 134

Prevention of armed conflict

Right of peoples to self-determination

Promotion and protection of human rights

The rule of law at the national and international levels

The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

Letter dated 19 January 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 20 January 2022, Azerbaijan will commemorate National Mourning Day and pay tribute to its brave sons and daughters who, thirty-two years ago, sacrificed their lives for the country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued on this occasion (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35, 73, 74, 85 and 134.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 19 January 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the occasion of 20 January – National Mourning Day

Over the night of 19–20 January 1990, by order of the USSR leadership, 26,000 Soviet troops invaded Baku, Sumgait and other cities of Azerbaijan. As a result of this military intervention, 147 civilians were killed and 744 were seriously injured. This event went down in the history of modern Azerbaijan as “Black January”.

Before these tragic events, the groundless territorial claims of Armenia against Azerbaijan in the late 1980s, the aggressive separatist activities of Armenian radicals in the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous oblast of the then Azerbaijan SSR, the Soviet leadership’s support for these activities and the violent and brutal deportation of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from Armenia spurred the expansion of the movement against the Soviet Government in Azerbaijan. Deployed to the country to prevent the national movement and break the will of the Azerbaijani people for independence, the Soviet Army committed massacres against the civilian population, violating the norms of international law and the Constitutions of the former USSR and the Azerbaijan SSR.

Immediately after the tragic events, National Leader Heydar Aliyev held a press conference at the Permanent Representation of Azerbaijan in Moscow, strongly condemning this atrocity and demanding a political assessment of the massacre against our people and the punishment of the perpetrators. At a special session of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) in February 1994, the brutal killing of innocent people on 20 January 1990 was qualified as military aggression and a crime. As an outcome of deliberations in March 1994, a decision “On the tragic events committed in Baku on 20 January 1990” was adopted, declaring 20 January the National Mourning Day.

Thirty-two years have passed since the January 20 tragedy. However, being a gross violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international legal documents and one of the most serious crimes of the 20th century by its essence and scope, these events have not yet received international political and legal assessment. The former Soviet leadership bears direct responsibility for this crime. In accordance with international law, the events of 20 January must be qualified as a crime against humanity and those ordered and perpetrated it must be held accountable.

Under the leadership of Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the brave Azerbaijani Army ensured the territorial integrity of our country as a result of the 44-day Patriotic War. In the thirty-first year after the restoration of its independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan is now a worthy, reliable and responsible member of the world community.

Strengthening the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is the foundation of our statehood, and we will persevere in our struggle for the steadfast upholding of these fundamental principles. We will continue to respond resolutely to any possible threats to the independence and integrity of our State, and all necessary steps will be taken to bring to justice those responsible for various crimes against the people and State of Azerbaijan.

We commemorate with deep respect and gratitude the memory of all our heroes who gave their lives for the independence of Azerbaijan, as well as for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country.