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Prevention of armed conflict**Peacebuilding and sustaining peace****Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia
and related intolerance****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****Security Council****Seventy-eighth year****Letter dated 12 September 2023 from the Permanent
Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed
to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to submit herewith the statement of the “Karabakh Missing Families” Public Union on the occasion of International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances (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 31, 61, 69, 71, 83 and 129, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar T. Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 12 September 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement dated 30 August 2023 by the “Karabakh Missing Families” Public Union on the occasion of International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

In the 1990s, twenty percent of Azerbaijan’s internationally recognized territory was occupied by Armenian armed forces, as a result of which nearly 4,000 Azerbaijani citizens went missing in the first Karabakh war. Unfortunately, in the aftermath of the military aggression more than 700 civilians, including children, women and the elderly, have disappeared along with servicemen.

Of the total number of missing persons, 872 people, including 29 children, 98 women and 112 elderly, were taken prisoner or remained in the occupied territories, which is confirmed by witness statements.

In a number of cases, people went missing along with their family members and relatives. Entire families and generations were exterminated. Research confirms that two to seven members of 61 families went missing during the first Karabakh war, with no information about them available to this day. This is disrespectful not only to the families of the missing Azerbaijanis, but also to the whole of humanity.

Facts and witness statements confirm that during the occupation of the sovereign territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan by Armenia during the first Karabakh war, the norms of international humanitarian law were flagrantly violated, the civilian population was targeted, the elderly people unable to leave their homes during a sudden attack on their settlements were burned together with their houses, beaten, tortured, hanged from trees or shot pointblank.

According to the requirements of international humanitarian law and its main source, the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, the right of families to receive information about persons missing during armed conflicts is recognized beyond any doubt. However, family members of missing Azerbaijanis have been denied this right for more than 30 years. Armenia’s refusal to provide information about the missing Azerbaijanis has condemned their families to incessant suffering. As a result of Armenia’s inhumane position, thousands of missing families have been forced to live with the pain of this terrible tragedy for 30 years and have not been able to obtain any information about their loved ones.

It is known that the territories of Azerbaijan occupied in the first Karabakh war were under the control of the Armenian army for 30 years. For this reason, detailed information about all missing persons, including their burial places, is held by the Armenian side. The interview given to Armenian media in December 2021 by Lt-Gen Gagik Melkonyan, Armenian MP and former deputy minister of defense, confirms this again.

In the interview, Gagik Melkonyan stated that corpses of hundreds of servicemen of the Azerbaijan army who died in 1994 remained on the battlefield and the Armenians buried them. Although Azerbaijan made an official appeal to Armenia through the mediation of international organizations regarding the issue, there was no response.

In September 2020, the Azerbaijani Army, which carried out a counter-offensive operation following a provocation of the Armenian armed forces, freed its homeland from occupation and implemented the resolutions adopted by the UN in 1993.

However, the excessive pollution of these territories by Armenia during the years of occupation does not allow the people expelled from there, including their missing families, to go to their homelands. In addition, Armenia does not provide Azerbaijan with accurate minefield maps or any information about the mass graves of the missing.

More than 300 Azerbaijani citizens have become victim of mine explosions in the last three years due to the lack of minefield maps.

In recent years, the steps taken by relevant state institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of clarifying the fate of the missing, including the taking of biological samples from families, extracting DNA profiles and conducting excavations in the territories freed from occupation, have created a glimmer of hopes for the families of the missing. However, the discovery of 10 mass graves in a short period of time and the fact that our loved ones were tortured and buried in an inhumane manner breaks our hearts.

Analyses, including G. Melkonyan's information, show that new mass graves are yet to be discovered. Killing people with torture, mass burials and removal of all traces of burials is a sign of tremendous disrespect for all human values.

We, as a public organization uniting the family members of nearly 4,000 Azerbaijanis who went missing as a result of Armenia's military aggression against Azerbaijan, demand that Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan provide information about missing Azerbaijani citizens and mass graves to the Azerbaijani side.

G. Melkonyan belongs to the political party headed by the Armenian prime minister, therefore, Nikol Pashinyan can at least provide information about the location of the mass graves alluded by G. Melkonyan in the interview.

We, as well as the President of the Council of the European Union, Mr. Charles Michel, and the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, call on and pressure Armenia to release information on the fate of missing persons and provide information on mass graves to the Azerbaijani side.

We call on the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Commission on Missing Persons to step up their efforts in this area.

The problem of missing persons is relevant not only for Azerbaijan, it is of global nature. Therefore, we call on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to appoint a UN Special Rapporteur on missing persons.

We, the Azerbaijani families of the missing, hope that all armed conflicts in the world end soon, peace and tranquility are established on the globe and no person, regardless of their national identity, goes missing.

(Signed) Konul **Behbudova**
Chairperson
"Karabakh Missing Families" Public Union