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Agenda items 31, 71, 80, 83 and 129

Prevention of armed conflict

Promotion and protection of human rights

Crimes against humanity

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 20 January 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 20 January 2024, Azerbaijan commemorates National Mourning Day and pays tribute to its brave sons and daughters who, 34 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 on that 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 31, 71, 80, 83 and 129.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 20 January 2024 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

Today, 34 years have passed since the former Soviet authorities committed the military aggression against the people of Azerbaijan and an unprecedented massacre targeting the civilian population in breach of international law.

The disregard in the late 1980s by the former USSR of Armenia's illegal territorial claims against our country, the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from their ancestral lands in the territory of present-day Armenia and ethnic riots incited to back separatist activities in the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan gave further impetus to the rise of the national independence movement against Soviet rule in Azerbaijan.

In order to suppress the national independence movement in Azerbaijan by force, on the night of 19–20 January 1990, as a result of military aggression against Azerbaijan by units and special forces of the Soviet Army and a contingent of internal troops, massacres of civilians, including children, women and the elderly, were committed in the cities of Baku and Sumgayit, and in Lankaran and Neftchala. The military aggression of the occupying forces claimed the lives of 150 civilians, 744 others were severely wounded and 4 people went missing.

On 21 January 1990, immediately after the tragic events, at the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan in Moscow, National Leader Heydar Aliyev was able to break through the Soviet regime's information blockade and convey the truth about the atrocities to the world community, exposing this heinous crime against our people.

The 20 January tragedy had a decisive impact on the formation of the national identity of Azerbaijan and became a historic turning point in the restoration of the State independence of Azerbaijan. The people of Azerbaijan, subjected to military, political and moral aggression by the Soviet regime 34 years ago, demonstrated devotion to their historical traditions of struggle. The sons and daughters of the Motherland, who gave their lives to defend justice on that tragic day, left a remarkable page in the heroic history of our people. On 20 January 1990, which is a day of national pride along with tragedy in our history, the people of Azerbaijan conveyed to the whole world that they deserve to live free, sovereign and independent.

Following the return of National Leader Heydar Aliyev to power in Azerbaijan, at a special session of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) held in February 1994, the brutal killing of innocent people on 20 January 1990 was qualified as military aggression and a crime, and in March 1994 a decision "On the tragic events committed in Baku on 20 January 1990" was adopted.

Despite the terrible atrocities committed against the people of Azerbaijan, the attempts to undermine its territorial integrity and sovereignty and the military occupation of our lands by Armenia for nearly 30 years, the 44-day Patriotic War and the local counter-terrorism measures on 19–20 September last year resulted in the full restoration of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan. For the first time this year, the 34th anniversary of the 20 January tragedy, which backfired by becoming the peak of the national independence movement, coincides with the time of complete restoration of the State's sovereignty, for which its sons and daughters sacrificed their lives.

We remember with deep respect and gratitude the memory of our Martyrs who gave their lives for our independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty.
