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

Letter dated 25 February 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Republic of Azerbaijan has consistently informed the international community of numerous war crimes and other serious offences committed during the occupation of its territories since the early 1990s and has repeatedly emphasized the need for accountability.¹

The slaughter committed by the armed forces of Armenia in the town of Khojaly in the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan on the night of 25 and 26 February 1992 claimed the lives of 613 civilians, including 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly persons. Another 487 residents were severely wounded, 1,275 were taken hostage and 150 went missing. The victims were treated with extreme brutality.

¹ See, for example, [A/74/676-S/2020/90](#); [A/75/357-S/2020/948](#); [A/75/379-S/2020/965](#); [A/75/486-S/2020/969](#); [A/75/487-S/2020/973](#); [A/75/492-S/2020/977](#); [A/75/508-S/2020/1001](#); [A/75/512-S/2020/1010](#); [A/75/529-S/2020/1027](#); [A/75/555-S/2020/1047](#); [A/75/558-S/2020/1051](#); [A/75/574-S/2020/1083](#); [A/75/660-S/2020/1267](#); [A/76/736-S/2022/176](#); [A/77/695-S/2023/34](#); [A/79/690-S/2024/908](#); and [A/79/796-S/2025/105](#).



This atrocity has been condemned internationally as an egregious violation of international law, amounting to a crime against humanity or an act of genocide.²

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued a statement on the occasion of the thirty-fourth anniversary of the tragedy.³

It is worth noting that States are under the obligation to punish serious crimes. This obligation is explicitly set out in the 1949 Geneva Conventions for the protection of war victims, which are the key instruments of international humanitarian law, as well as in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and other international instruments. Customary international law also establishes the obligation to investigate and punish genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Azerbaijan has taken decisive steps to investigate and prosecute serious offences committed against its civilians and other protected persons during the conflict, in full accordance with its national legislation and international obligations. Earlier this month, the national courts in Azerbaijan rendered judgments in a number of criminal cases stemming from the former conflict, bringing those responsible for atrocious crimes to justice.

However, most of the perpetrators, having found a safe haven in other countries, continue to enjoy impunity. Moreover, the denial and ignorance of the crimes, coupled with attempts by some non-governmental organizations, media outlets and third-country parliamentarians to discredit and thereby obstruct justice, constitute clear contempt for international law and the rule of law and an affront to the victims and their families.

Accountability is undeniable and must be an inevitable consequence of the offences committed. At the same time, combating impunity is an important constituent on the path to genuine reconciliation and also helps prevent the recurrence of heinous acts. Azerbaijan will continue its efforts to ensure justice and to build, strengthen and sustain peace and stability in the region.

² See, for example, *The Independent* (29 February 1992); *The Age* (6 March 1992); *Newsweek* (16 March 1992); *Time* (16 March 1992); "Report by the Memorial Human Rights Centre on massive violations of human rights committed in the seizure of Khojaly during the night of 25 to 26 February 1992", in Fiona Maclachlan and Ian Peart (eds.), *Khojaly Witness of a War Crime: Armenia in the Dock* (Ithaca Press, 2014), pp. 75–83; Letter dated 23 March 1997 from the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/1997/03/23/response-armenian-government-letter-to-town-khojaly-nagorno-karabakh>; Council of Europe, Declaration adopted by the Committee of Ministers, 11 March 1992, doc. No. CM/Del/Concl(92)471 bis; Organization of Islamic Cooperation, resolution No. 8/43-C on Affiliated Institutions, 18–19 October 2016, para. 8; Organization of Islamic Cooperation, final communiqué of the twelfth session of the Islamic Summit Conference, 6–7 February 2013, para. 117; European Court of Human Rights, App. No. 40984/07, Judgment of 22 April 2010, paras. 60–62 and 87; Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York University Press, 2013), pp. 182–185; Jessica A. Stanton, *Violence and Restraint in Civil War: Civilian Targeting in the Shadow of International Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 237; Laurence Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 37; Malcolm N. Shaw, "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*, annex; <https://justiceforkhojaly.org/content/international-recognition-0>; and <https://justiceforkhojaly.org/content/countries-organizations>.

³ <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no04926>.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 31, 62, 67, 69, 71, 81, 84 and 131, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tofig **Musayev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
