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High-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council

Letter dated 9 August 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In his letter dated 20 July 2021 ([A/75/967-S/2021/76](#)), the Permanent Representative of Armenia once again presented his Government's totally false, absurd and repeatedly refuted allegations, the only purpose of which is to cover up its own heinous crimes and justify heavy losses inflicted on its armed forces on the battlefield. The following points need to be made in that regard.

In the early 1990s, Armenia unleashed full-scale war against Azerbaijan. As a result of the aggression, a significant part of the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan was seized and subsequently remained under unlawful occupation for almost 30 years. More than 1 million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced persons and were prevented from returning to their homes over the whole period of occupation.



Armenia is responsible for numerous violations of international humanitarian law during the conflict. Some of the offences, such as the brutal killing within a very few hours of hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians, including children and women, in the town of Khojaly in February 1992, which constitute war crimes, also amount to crimes against humanity and acts of genocide.¹

In 1993, the Security Council adopted four resolutions (resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993)), condemning the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories and reaffirming respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory. The Council further demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The resolutions of the General Assembly as well as numerous decisions and documents adopted by other international organizations are framed along the same lines.

However, key demands contained in those resolutions and documents have not been implemented by Armenia. Instead, Armenia has chosen the path of confronting international law and the unified position of the world community and directed all its efforts at colonizing the seized territories along ethnic lines, including by means of implanting settlers from Armenia and abroad and destructing and appropriating Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage.

Moreover, despite the conflict settlement process and the establishment of a ceasefire in 1994, Armenia has repeatedly resorted to various provocations on the ground and has gradually toughened rhetoric at the highest level, threatening to unleash new war for new territories² and hit major cities and civilian infrastructure in Azerbaijan with ballistic missiles,³ declaring Azerbaijan's historical land – Garabagh – as part of Armenia⁴ and defining the consolidation of the outcomes of the aggression as its strategic goal in the negotiation process.⁵ Such a policy could in no way be reconciled with the objectives of achieving a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Another act of aggression by Armenia, on 27 September 2020, with the involvement of mercenaries and foreign terrorist fighters,⁶ has become a logical consequence of the impunity it has enjoyed for more than 30 years. Even the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire have not convinced Armenia to halt its aggression and unlawful

¹ See, e.g., the 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, 7 February 2020); and the letters dated 17 February 2021 and 19 March 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/75/745-S/2021/156, 18 February 2021; and A/75/742-S/2021/279, 22 March 2021).

² See, e.g., Sargis Harutyunyan, "Armenian army chief opposes territorial concessions to Baku", *Azatutyun*, 21 September 2017, available at www.azatutyun.am/a/28748921.html; and "We do the opposite – new war for new territories: Minister Tonoyan's tough statement", *Lragir*, 30 March 2019, available at www.lragir.am/en/2019/03/30/71511.

³ See, e.g., transcript of *Armnews* television interview with the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, 11 August 2014, available at www.president.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2014/08/11/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-interview-Armnews-Sochi; and Sisak Gabrielian, "Karabakh army chief warns of missile strikes on Azerbaijan", *Azatutyun*, 24 July 2018, available at www.azatutyun.am/a/29388040.html.

⁴ See the speech of the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, 5 August 2019, available at www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2019/08/05/Rally.

⁵ See the message of the Prime Minister to the Security Council of Armenia, 10 July 2020, available at www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2020/-7/10/Nikol-Pashinyan-Security-Council-meeting.

⁶ See, e.g., the report on the use of foreign terrorist fighters by the Republic of Armenia in its recent aggression against the Republic of Azerbaijan (A/75/625-S/2020/1161, annex, 4 December 2020).

actions. It was clear from the outset that its spurious adherence to the said appeal was nothing but falsehood and hypocrisy. Armenia has regarded the ceasefire and peace process only as a means of cementing its military gains and has spared no effort to expand and secure its aggression and annexation, not to save lives and alleviate the sufferings of people in need.

This time again, with the resumption and further escalation of hostilities in September–November 2020, Armenia remained true to its atrocity methods of warfare. The intentional, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of military force against densely populated Azerbaijani cities far outside the conflict zone where there were no military targets, including in particular a series of ruthless night-time missile strikes on the residential areas in the cities of Ganja and Barda, resulted in the killing of 101 Azerbaijani civilians, including 12 children. Over 400 civilians were wounded, some 84,000 people were forced to leave their homes and almost 5,000 private houses, apartment buildings and other civilian objects were either destroyed or damaged. Even hospitals, medical facilities, ambulances, schools, kindergartens, religious sites, cultural monuments and cemeteries were not spared. Investigations conducted by international non-governmental organizations confirmed the repeated use by Armenia of prohibited weapons. There have also been multiple instances of killings and mistreatment of Azerbaijani prisoners of war and desecration of the bodies of deceased Azerbaijani servicemen.⁷

In response, Azerbaijan used counter-force to repulse aggression, protect its people, end the occupation and allow the internally displaced persons to return to their homes. What the Permanent Representative of Armenia calls “the pre-planned large-scale military aggression” and “a premeditated military offensive” was the exercise by Azerbaijan of the inherent right of self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and customary international law. It must be particularly emphasized that Azerbaijan acted exclusively on its sovereign soil.

In the course of the combat actions that lasted 44 days, the armed forces of Azerbaijan liberated more than 300 cities, towns and villages of Azerbaijan from occupation, including the Fuzuli, Gubadly, Jabrayil and Zangilan districts, the settlement of Hadrut and Azerbaijan’s cultural capital – the city of Shusha. The statement of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation, signed on 9 November 2020, has ensured the cessation of all military activities and the withdrawal of Armenian troops from other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, namely the Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachyn districts.

As we have reported in our previous communications,⁸ the territories of Azerbaijan liberated from occupation revealed the horrific scale of destruction. Most parts of these territories have literally been turned into a ghost land. The city of Aghdam was razed to the ground. After the liberation of Fuzuli, our army could not find a single building in the city at which to raise the Azerbaijani flag. Thousands of mosques, historical monuments, museums, artworks and other cultural artefacts were destroyed, looted and vandalized. Defiled by Armenian graffiti, the mosques in the Aghdam, Gubadly and Zangilan districts of Azerbaijan were used as pigsties and cowsheds. Even the graveyards were not spared. The sole purpose of these acts of Armenia was aimed at erasing Azerbaijanis and all traces of Azerbaijani heritage from those areas.

⁷ For more information, see, e.g., the letter dated 18 December 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan addressed to the Secretary-General (A/75/660-S/2020/1267, 22 December 2020).

⁸ See, e.g., the letters dated 18 December 2020 and 4 May 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan addressed to the Secretary-General (A/75/660-S/2020/1267, 22 December 2020; and A/75/872-S/2021/429, 6 May 2021).

Even the signing of the aforementioned statement has not prevented the retreating armed forces of Armenia and the Armenian illegal settlers vacating the occupied territories from carrying out hate-fuelled acts, such as disassembling and burning houses, schools and other civilian objects, severing electric cables and poles, destroying gas stations, chopping down trees and setting forests on fire in an attempt to leave nothing behind.

Despite the cessation of hostilities and the end of the conflict, Azerbaijani citizens continue to die as a result of mine explosions in the liberated territories. Armenia refuses to provide a complete set of maps showing the locations of landmines in the liberated areas, thus indiscriminately targeting civilian lives and trying to delay the return of the internally displaced persons and impede post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and humanitarian efforts in these territories.⁹

It is notable that, to date, Armenia has taken no steps to investigate and prosecute war crimes and other serious violations committed by its armed forces in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Instead, it venerated and glorified the perpetrators as national heroes and promoted them to the highest political and military positions in Armenia. Their only service rendered to Armenia was the killing and torturing of thousands of Azerbaijanis on ethnic grounds.

Against that background, Armenia should first take care of its own track record on human rights and democracy, rather than groundlessly blame others. Furthermore, the crackdown on opposition, the persecution of political opponents, politically motivated killings, attacks on human rights defenders and civil society, violence against women and children, systemic corruption, limited freedom of the media and interference in the judiciary are bitter realities in today's Armenia.¹⁰

As to the false allegations about the so-called “anti-Armenian hate crimes” and “radicalization of society in Azerbaijan”, the purpose is evidently to mislead the international community. Suffice it to recall that, unlike other countries in the South Caucasus and across the globe, Armenia is uniquely monoethnic, having achieved such a discreditable situation not because of natural demographic processes, but as a result of deliberate policy and practice of ethnic cleansing and cultural erasure against Azerbaijanis – once the largest national minority in Armenia.¹¹ Attempts to portray Azerbaijanis as a “nomadic tribe” with no historical or cultural ties to their lands, while asserting that “for centuries the population of the area was homogeneous, populated exclusively by Armenians”, are illustrative in that regard.¹² The recent statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, in which, *inter alia*, it alleged that Azerbaijan’s “geographical and political name has only a century-old history, and

⁹ See, e.g., the letters dated 22 February 2021 and 4 June 2021 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan addressed to the Secretary-General (A/75/778-S/2021/177, annex, 24 February 2021; and A/75/907/Rev.1-S/2021/532/Rev.1, annex, 15 June 2021).

¹⁰ See, e.g., <https://freedomhouse.org/country/armenia/freedom-world/2020>; <https://freedomhouse.org/country/armenia/nations-transit/2021>; <https://freedomhouse.org/article/armenia-new-amendments-threaten-stifle-media-freedom-and-freedom-expression>; <https://amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/armenia/report-armenia>; <https://fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/armenia-arbitrary-arrest-of-several-environmental-rights-defenders>; and <https://khosq.am/en/reports/quarterly-report-of-cpfe-on-situation-with-freedom-of-expression--and-violations-of-rights-of-journalists-and-media-in-armenia-january-march-2021>.

¹¹ See, e.g., the third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia under the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD/C/372/Add.3, 13 May 2002), para. 5; and the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia (A/57/18, 2002), para. 275.

¹² See “Serzh Sargsyan meets with journalists from diaspora”, *ArmenPress*, 16 October 2010, available at <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/624459/eng>.

the name Azerbaijani is even more recent”,¹³ is not only an outrageous falsification of history, but another evidence of Armenia’s deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing based on fabricated historical narratives and deep-rooted hatred against Azerbaijanis.

The post-conflict realities pave the way for Armenia to release itself from mythology and racist prejudices. The compliance with international law and good-neighbourly relations are the main objectives to which Armenia should finally begin aspiring. Hopefully, it will not miss this opportunity.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 9, 15, 18, 34, 35, 40, 64, 70, 72, 86 and 135, and of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda items 5 (a) and 6.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

¹³ See the annex to the letter dated 19 July 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General ([A/75/970-S/2021/671](#), 23 July 2021).