



**THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
TO THE UNITED NATION**

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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Yashar Aliyev
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations
at the Security Council open debate on the theme “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”**

25 May 2021

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of China for having convened this important meeting.

Although international norms and institutional activities on the protection of civilians in armed conflict have significantly developed over the years, serious challenges remain, with the hate-driven violence, increased levels of displacement and the lack of accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Azerbaijan has seriously suffered from the devastating effects of the war unleashed against it by Armenia in the early 1990s. As a result, a part of my country was seized and subsequently remained under occupation for almost thirty years. The war claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people. In addition to over 200,000 Azerbaijanis earlier expelled from Armenia, all occupied territories were ethnically cleansed of their more than 700,000 population.

Some of the offences committed by Armenian forces during the conflict, such as the brutal killing within a very few hours of hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians in the town of Khojaly in February 1992, which constitute war crimes, also amount to crimes against humanity and acts of genocide.

The scale of the atrocities is evidenced, inter alia, by about 4000 citizens of Azerbaijan, including 719 civilians, who went missing in connection with the conflict. Armenia still refuses to account for these persons or to conduct investigations into their fate.

Another act of aggression by Armenia at the end of September 2020 and the subsequent combat actions caused numerous casualties among Azerbaijani civilians. Shelling with prohibited cluster munitions and ballistic missiles of major cities and towns of Azerbaijan located far from the front line where there were no military targets 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 hundreds of civilian objects were either destroyed or damaged.

In the course of the combat actions, Azerbaijan liberated more than 300 cities, towns and villages from occupation. These areas provided vast evidence of the horrifying scale of destruction and looting carried out by the aggressors.

The Government of Azerbaijan prioritized their rehabilitation and reconstruction to ensure the safe return of the displaced population and post-conflict peacebuilding.

However, even after the cessation of hostilities, hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians were killed or seriously wounded as a result of mine explosions in the liberated territories. Armenia refuses to share information about the landmines, thus deliberately targeting human lives and attempting to impede the return of the internally displaced persons.

As Armenia continues to disseminate falsehoods, stir up enmity, glorifies war criminals, hatches revanchist aspirations and threatens to use force again, it is important to end impunity for the war that it unleashed and the thousands of civilians whom it killed and tortured.

The Secretary-General underlined in his report that what is needed urgently now is the political will to respect the rules, implement good practices and prosecute perpetrators and ensure reparations for victims, bearing in mind that accountability for serious violations must be systematic and universal.

Thank you.