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Nümayəndəliyi**



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**Statement by Mr. Tofiq F. Musayev
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations**

at the Sixth Committee of the seventy-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly under agenda item 81: "Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts"

18 October 2022

Mr. Chairman,

Azerbaijan is strongly committed to the fundamental principles and rules of international humanitarian law, condemns all violations of the laws and customs of war and underscores the critical importance of accountability for such violations.

Azerbaijan has consistently promoted international humanitarian law at the national and international levels.

Over the years, Azerbaijan has been the main sponsor of the General Assembly resolution on missing persons and the Commission on the Status of Women resolution on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts. Azerbaijan also initiated the adoption by the Human Rights Council of the resolution on the protection of cultural rights and property in situations of armed conflict, as well as contributed to the drafting and publication of the UNESCO Military Manual on the Protection of Cultural Property.

Azerbaijan actively cooperates with the International Committee of the Red Cross, regularly conducts international humanitarian law trainings for its military personnel and has taken concrete steps to investigate and prosecute the alleged breaches of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chairman,

Regrettably, the delegation of Armenia continues its attempts to bring to the work of the Sixth Committee its destructive political agenda and fabricated narratives.

We resolutely reject as false and misleading the information presented by Armenia for the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/264).

I am compelled to remind that so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh”, to which Armenia referred in its written information, long ceased to exist as an administrative and territorial unit. This area is an integral part of Azerbaijan, which was under Armenia’s unlawful occupation for nearly three decades. Following the liberation of the occupied territories and the end of the conflict, by his decree of 7 July 2021, the President of Azerbaijan established the Karabakh and East Zangazur economic regions in the country.

During the hostilities two years ago, Azerbaijan fought not against a fictitious entity, but against the regular armed forces of Armenia, as well as terrorist and mercenary groups under its command and control, deployed in the then occupied territories of my country.

Azerbaijan used a counter-force to end the aggression and unlawful occupation, restore its territorial integrity and protect its people, acting exclusively on its sovereign soil, in full conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law.

Regarding so-called prisoners of war and hostages, Azerbaijan returned all detainees under the terms of the Trilateral Statement of 10 November 2020. In addition, on 4 October 2022, Azerbaijan repatriated 17 Armenian servicemen captured during the recent border escalation. While in detention, they were treated in line with the relevant norms of international humanitarian law, the wounded were provided with all the necessary medical care and the International Committee of the Red Cross had an access to visit them.

As to the humanitarian access to the formerly occupied territories, Azerbaijan is fully committed to transparency to allow the international community to bear witness, for the first time in thirty years, what has happened in those territories. Azerbaijan has hosted and continues to welcome site visits from the United Nations and other international organizations that are conducted in an independent and impartial manner. In contrast, by politicizing the issue and interfering in the functions of international organizations, Armenia makes everything possible to impede their access, while passing over in silence the blocking of the visits of the same organizations to these territories when they were under its occupation.

Above all, Armenia’s speculations and misinterpretations with regard to international humanitarian law are outrageous from the point of view of its own responsibility for numerous war crimes committed during the aggression, which include the unlawful targeting of civilians and peaceful settlements, the taking and holding of hostages, the mistreatment and summary execution of prisoners of war and civilian detainees, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement and changing the character of the occupied territories, the extensive destruction of inhabited areas and civilian infrastructure, the destruction and eradication of Azerbaijani cultural heritage, damage to the natural environment and the use of prohibited weapons in apparent indiscriminate attacks against the populated areas.

Some of this conduct that constitute war crimes also amount to the crime of genocide, as ethnic Azerbaijanis were targeted because of their nationality and/or ethnicity, and the relevant intent was to destroy the group in part.

While Armenia talks profusely about international humanitarian law, there is no evidence that it has investigated or prosecuted, in a prompt and effective manner, the violations of international humanitarian law committed by its armed forces against Azerbaijani victims.

Instead, Armenia not only has effectively ignored these violations, but refrains from shedding light to the fate of almost 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan went missing during the war.

In a similar vein, Armenia refuses to share accurate and comprehensive information about the minefields in the liberated territories, thus deliberately targeting human lives and attempting to impede post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and humanitarian efforts in the liberated territories and the safe return of the internally displaced persons to their homes.

In concluding, it is essential to consistently maintain the focus on the implementation of international humanitarian law, insist on accountability and persistently reiterate demand to all States to comply fully with their international obligations.

Thank you.