



Check against delivery

**Right of reply  
by the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**delivered by Mr. Seymur Mardaliyev,  
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the UN High Commissioner for Refugees**

**Geneva, 4 October 2018**

Madame Chair,

I am exercising this right of reply to the statement made by Armenia on Monday.

Annually in October we gather at the EXCOM session to demonstrate our solidarity with millions of refugees and other displaced persons who were forced to flee their homes and deprived of their fundamental rights around the globe due to the human rights violators like Armenia. We have to think seriously how to compel countries like Armenia to abide by the letter and spirit of the UN Charter and international law as this is a key for instance to find durable solution to the protracted mass displacement.

Everyone sitting in this Hall knows that it is exactly due to Armenia's policy of aggression and occupation against Azerbaijan as well as notorious practice of ethnic cleansing on a massive scale in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and Armenia itself, Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs suffer from the violation of their rights for more than 25 years. It is Armenia that by rejecting to implement four UN Security Council resolutions of 1993 which demand immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories by all means prevents Azerbaijani IDPs to return to their places of origin. Today Azerbaijan hosts per capita one of the highest number of displaced population in the world. It is sufficient to consult UNHCR's database for the number of displaced population in Armenia and Azerbaijan to have a clear understanding about situation on the ground.

While talking much about Syrian refugees of Armenian origin in Armenia, Armenian representative deliberately omitted to mention that these refugees are illegally settled in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in flagrant violation of 1949 Geneva Conventions. The purpose of this policy is crystal clear: to prevent the hundreds thousands of forcibly displaced Azerbaijanis from returning to their homes and consolidate the annexation of Azerbaijani territories. The appeal by Armenia to the UNHCR to help Armenian ineffective authorities in dealing with Syrian refugees of Armenian origin is nothing but useless attempt to secure funding for illegal resettlement policy in the occupied territories.

As regards the Armenian attempts to misinterpret events of April 2016, escalation in the conflict zone was the consequence of the direct and deliberate targeting Azerbaijani civilians by Armenian forces living in close vicinity to the line of contact which resulted in killing 6 civilians including one child and wounding 26 people. To defend the civilian population, Azerbaijani armed forces undertook successful counter measures that resulted in restoring Azerbaijan's sovereignty on certain territories in the occupied regions as well as ensuring the return of Azerbaijani displaced persons to their places of origin.

Sumqayit events Armenian representative referred to that took place prior to the independence of Azerbaijan was masterminded by the Armenian extremist organizations as a mean of launching an extensive anti-Azerbaijani campaign for covering up the ethnic cleansing and mass expulsion of indigenous Azerbaijani population from Armenia that happened earlier in 1988 and starting annexation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region from Azerbaijan under the pretext of impossibility of further coexistence of Armenians with Azerbaijanis. Main perpetrators of those events were ethnic Armenian Eduard Gregorian and his fellow compatriots who were orchestrated by Soviet intelligence services.

Madame Chair,

Presence of Armenian troops in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is the single obstacle for finding durable solution to the displacement in my country. Question emerges what is the objective behind Armenia's aggressive stance at the current session right after the meeting between two foreign ministers in New York last week that produced some optimism for future conflict settlement negotiations. One can assume that it is either another attempt to obstruct conflict settlement process or maybe difficulty of choice to be made by Armenia between peace and further instability in our region. The earlier Armenia grasps the importance of political solution that High Commissioner in his remarks rightly highlighted and Azerbaijan strives for from the day number one, sooner Azerbaijani IDPs can return to their native lands with long-awaited peace restored in our small region.

I thank you.