

APPEAL
of Religious Leaders in Azerbaijan to the World Community
on the 29th anniversary of the Khojaly genocide

In the name of the Almighty Creator!

We, the leaders of religious denominations in Azerbaijan, address the World Community on the eve of the 29th anniversary of the Khojaly genocide, one of the bloodiest tragedies of the XX century and one of the gravest war crimes against Humanity.

In the night leading from 25 to 26 February 1992, Armenian Armed Forces, by carrying out an attack on the town of Khojaly with the participation of personnel of the 366th Motorized Rifle Regiment of the former Soviet Army, dislocated in Khankendi, purposefully murdered 613 civilians, including the elderly and children and pregnant women, in an especially cruel and merciless manner. The town of Khojaly was razed to the ground by massive fire of heavy military equipment, 150 of its residents went missing, 1,275 were taken captive and brutally tortured, incomprehensible cruel acts were committed on the dead bodies of the savagely murdered peaceful civilians. The deliberate act of genocide in Khojaly, which is considered one of the worst crimes against Humanity, was the culmination of atrocities of the Armenian Army.

Implementation of the policy of ethnic cleansing against the Azerbaijani people, physical and moral terror, expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people from their lands and of their transformation into internally displaced persons, gross violations of their human rights, destruction and looting of villages, towns, ancient and rich cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people - were the results of the aggressive policy of Armenia, which kept under occupation the internationally recognized territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan for nearly 30 years.

On September 27, 2020, Armenia launched a large-scale military provocation against Azerbaijan. Armenian armed forces tried to expand the occupied territories by launching heavy artillery strikes against Azerbaijani military personnel, peaceful civilians and civilian infrastructure. In response, the Azerbaijani armed forces launched a counter-attack operation. As a result of the 44-day Patriotic War, Azerbaijan liberated its lands and restored its territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and in accordance with international law and UN Security Council Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884.

During the Patriotic War, the Armed Forces of Armenia continued its war crimes against Azerbaijan. Ignoring the norms of International Law and continuing its war crimes and acts of vandalism in gross violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the aggressor Armenia targeted large settlements in Azerbaijan, located far from the areas where military operations took place, including cities of Ganja, Barda, Tartar, Mingachevir and Gabala, using heavy artillery, ballistic missiles, white phosphorus and

98 civilians, including 11 children were killed, 414 civilians were wounded, and 2,465 houses, 97 apartment buildings and 495 civilian facilities were destroyed - this was effectively a continuation of the policy of genocide. Armenia's failure to provide maps of mined areas after the ceasefire was signed is another example of Armenia's aggressive nature, which is interested in human casualties. Hundreds of civilians are killed or become disabled for the rest of their lives by landmines planted by the Armenian side for 30 years.

We would like to inform the World Community that along with the policy of occupation, ethnic cleansing and genocide against Azerbaijan, Armenia has committed moral aggression and genocide against cultural heritage as well. As foreign observers have put it, once prosperous and thriving Azerbaijani towns became ghost towns during occupation, and historical, religious and cultural monuments of universal significance were razed to the ground in our lands, in which a "scorched-earth" policy was exercised. Hundreds of mosques, temples and churches, thousands of cemeteries, 706 historical monuments and museums, 927 libraries, 1107 educational institutions, 40,000 museum exhibits were destroyed and looted by the invader Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, captured Christian churches were gregorianized, mosques were turned into barns, and unprecedented acts of vandalism were committed on them, such as keeping animals forbidden in Islam. In order to create an Armenian trace in the lands they occupied, Armenian invaders carried out purposeful work to erase ancient Albanian, Muslim and Orthodox religious and cultural heritage that had historically existed in Karabakh and destroyed or damaged our cultural and spiritual heritage or falsified their history and origin to appropriate and gregorianise them. However, during all these years, the Armenian church in the center of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, has been safeguarded, and tens of thousands of our citizens who are ethnic Armenians live in peace and tranquility in our country.

Regrettably, political, social and religious circles in Armenia currently continue to incite their people to fresh wars by supporting the fascist actions of Armenian terrorists and extremists.

In the course of 30 years, several countries and international organizations have recognized the Khojaly tragedy as genocide. However, regrettably, some people believe false Armenian propaganda and are indifferent to this horrible crime. Crimes like violence, terrorism and extremism fail to receive a legal and political assessment around the World at present, because some countries, organizations and religious leaders exercise dangerous tendencies when dealing with problems like double standards, religious and ethnic discrimination. As a result of this approach, the massacres, including the Khojaly tragedy, failed to receive the assessment they deserve, and this paves the way for fresh large-scale crimes and creates the ground for a recurrence of genocides in different parts of the world, as well as for terrorism and extremism. Armenian terrorists have not yet been convicted by international courts, nor have they received the punishment they deserve for their war crimes. It's known that those involved in the Khojaly massacre will not be able to evade the judgment of History. It is

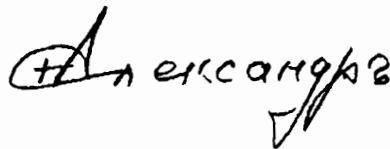
people into the war of aggression, and erected a monument to Njde Garegin, the founder of the Armenian racist-fascist ideology!

Azerbaijani believers and religious figures always honor the dear memory of all martyrs, including the Khojaly martyrs, who laid down their lives for the restoration of the territorial integrity of our country and for the liberation of our lands in Karabakh, the inalienable part of our Motherland, and ask God to rest their souls in peace. We wish peace, tranquility and prosperity to all peoples of the World. To this end, we call on the World's religious leaders, parliaments, the UN and other international organizations, the international Courts to give a legal and political assessment to the aggression and atrocities committed by Armenia against the Azerbaijani people, and to recognize the Khojaly tragedy as a large-scale crime - an act of genocide - like the Holocaust, Ruanda, and Srebrenica.

May the Almighty Creator help us all in good deeds and justice! AMEN!



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Baku, 23 February 2021