

## **Preliminary report of the specialized monitoring mission to the territories recently liberated from the Armenian occupation**

According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 1170 dated October 29, 2020 'On the organization of temporary special administration in the liberated territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan', temporary administration offices have been set up in the liberated territories for each district. These operational headquarters already established in Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Khodjavand and Gubadly districts, consist of the representatives of several government bodies, including the Ministry of Culture. According to the above-mentioned decree, two representatives of Ministry of Culture for each district have been deployed with instruction to organize the initial inventory and protection of historical monuments and cultural institutions.

During the first monitoring mission 56 cultural institutions were identified, including 25 libraries, 19 houses of culture and clubs, 7 museums, and 5 children's music schools. Almost all of them are in a completely destroyed state. 49 historical and cultural monuments and objects having historical, cultural, architectural, and archaeological importance were identified, including an Albanian temple in Hadrut settlement, Khojavand district (dating back to 1170), Maiden Tower (12th century) in the village of Amirkhanli, and an eight-pointed mausoleum in the village of Mammadbeyli, Zangilan district, as well as Karavansaray (17th century) in the village of Garghabazar, Fuzuli district. 28 monuments out of 49 identified were completely destroyed as a result of the Armenian occupation.

All mosques in the liberated territories, including 18th century Mamar mosque, 18th century mosque in Alkhanli village of Fuzuli, ancient mosque in Afandilar village of Gubadly, and many others have been almost destroyed and transformed to pigpen. State of the mosques in Shusha, historical and cultural capital of Karabakh will be verified once the monitoring mission will be allowed to go.

Following the Agreement of November, 10, the Republic of Armenia is forced to withdraw its armed forces from Aghdam (on November, 20), Kelbajar (on November, 25) and Lachin (on December, 1) districts.

According to Armenian media reports, the bells, crosses and ancient manuscripts of 13th century Khudavang monastery are being illegally removed to the Republic of Armenia. Besides that, precious artefacts found during illegal archaeological excavations near Shahbulag fortress of Aghdam district and kept in the local museum were also illegally transported to Armenia.

All of these actions constitute a gross violation of the Hague Convention of 1954 for protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, and its Two Protocols, namely Article 9 of the Second Protocol, as well as the Article 11 of 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

Along with complete destruction of almost all civilian infrastructure and environmental terror caused by deliberate setting of fires in the liberated territories, the Republic of Armenia also bears the responsibility for destruction of cultural institutions and historical monuments, desecration of holy sites and cemeteries.