



PRESS RELEASE

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Remembering the Khojaly Massacre – a tragedy not many know about

26 February 2005 will mark the thirteenth anniversary of the Khojaly Genocide – a bloody crime against humanity committed by Armenian nationalists, the monstrous slaughter of the peaceful inhabitants of the town of Khojaly.

On the night of 25/26 February 1992 armed forces of the Republic of Armenia committed an unthinkable, brutal crime. They mercilessly massacred hundreds of helpless, innocent people. They did not spare even children, women or the elderly. As a result of the atrocities, 613 civilians, including old people, women and children, were murdered, 1000 were disabled, and 1,275 persons were taken prisoner and subjected to unprecedented torture and humiliation. To this day, the fate of 150 persons is not known.

Various witnesses reported horrifying details of the massacre. The late Azerbaijani journalist Chingiz Mustafayev, who was the first to film the aftermath of the massacre, wrote an account of what he saw: “Some children were found with severed ears; the skin had been cut from the left side of an elderly woman's face; and men had been scalped.”

Russian human rights group Memorial reported about “scores of the corpses bore traces of profanation.

Doctors on a hospital train in Aghdam noted no less than four corpses that had been scalped and one that had been beheaded..... and one case of live scalping.”



An Azerbaijani child murdered during the extermination of the entire population of the town of Khojaly

Human Rights Watch called the tragedy at the time “the largest massacre to date in the conflict.” The New York Times wrote about “truckloads of bodies” and described acts of “scalping.”

Khojaly massacre was the culmination of hostilities against civilian population. “Hundreds, possibly thousands were slaughtered in a turkey shoot of civilians and their handful of defenders. There were 477 that (one) day, a number that did not include those missing and presumed dead”

– accounts those events a free-lance journalist Thomas Goltz.¹

¹ Thomas Goltz. *Azerbaijan diary*, p.150.



Mother and daughter killed in the town of Khojaly

As despicable as it may sound, the reason behind this unseen savagery is revealed by Defence minister of Armenia Serge Sarkissian in his interview to British journalist Tomas De Waal: “Before Khojaly the Azerbaijanis thought that... the Armenians were people who could not raise their hands against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]”.² No comments.

Regrettably the international community’s response was not adequate. Recently, the matter has been raised in the US House of Representatives. It was exactly this insufficient reaction to which Congressman Dan Burton of Indiana draw the attention of his fellow-colleagues in his statement on 17 February 2005: “Ironically and tragically, none of these Members has ever once mentioned the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Armenians during the Armenia-Azerbaijan war which ended a mere decade ago”. He concluded with the following appeal: “This is not the ringing condemnation that the survivors of Khojaly deserve, but it is an important first step by an international community that has too long been silent on this issue. Congress should take the next step and I hope my

colleagues will join me in standing with Azerbaijanis as they commemorate the tragedy of Khojaly. The world should know and remember.”

This year, as they have every year since the massacre, the residents of Khojaly, who managed to survive the massacre, issued an appeal to the UN, OSCE and Council of Europe, the text of which I have the honour to submit to you, and patiently expect them to take appropriate steps to hold the perpetrators of this crime responsible.



A child that fell victim to the atrocities perpetrated by Armenian militants in Khojaly

The date of 26 February was proclaimed as Day of Khojaly Genocide and National Mourning by a decision of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. A minute of silence is kept every year on 26 February at 5:00 pm to honour the memory of the victims of the Khojaly genocide.

The moral consciousness of the world demands to adequately account for this massacre as an act of genocide and remember its victims just as those of Baby Yar, Khatyn, Srebrenica....

² Tomas de Waal. *Black Garden*, (NYU Press. 2003), p.85.