



***PRESS RELEASE***  
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**Remembering the Genocide of the Azerbaijanis**

On 26 March 1998, in commemoration of all the tragic acts perpetrated against the Azerbaijani people, the late President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev signed the Decree proclaiming March 31<sup>st</sup> as the Day of Genocide of the Azerbaijanis. Since then, millions of Azerbaijanis around the globe remember the tragedy of their people, oppressed and persecuted throughout the last two centuries.

Azerbaijan's independence made it possible to reveal an objective picture of its people's historical past, and to bring to light the true nature of the facts falsified throughout the years. The genocide committed against the people of Azerbaijan is one of the unopened pages in history.

Singing of the treaties of Gyulistan in 1913 and Turkmanchai in 1828, marked the beginning of the imperialist policy of rapid mass resettlement of Armenians in the ancestral Azerbaijani lands. Genocide became an integral part of the occupation of Azerbaijani lands.

In order to justify the attempts to artificially create a state on Azerbaijani land, large-scale programmes were conducted and the idea of establishing "greater Armenia" was propagated. The Armenian nationalists began committing atrocities against Azerbaijanis starting in 1905. Violence of the next two years claimed thousands of Azerbaijani lives in the regions of Irevan, Zangazur, Goycha, Nakhchivan, Garabagh, Ganja and Baku.

Taking advantage of the situation following the end of WWI and the October 1917 revolution in Russia, Armenians began to pursue the implementation of their plans of eliminating Azerbaijanis under the banner of Bolshevism, under the pretext of combating counter-revolutionary elements.

In 1918 violent crimes against Azerbaijanis grew both in scale and number. Over 50,000 people were massacred on March 30 – April 1 in five major cities of Azerbaijan, with tens of thousands driven from their homes. Armenians set fire to homes and burned people alive. They destroyed national architectural treasures, schools, hospitals, mosques and other facilities, and left the greater part of Baku in ruins.

In 1919 and 1920, during its short-lived independence, the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan marked March 31<sup>st</sup> as the day of sorrow. After the Soviet regime was established, the Communist Government did its best to erase this date from people's memory, while continuing the policy of resettlement and chipping away at Azerbaijan's historic lands. Moscow-orchestrated 1920 transfer of the region of Zangazur to Armenia presents a vivid example.

New means came to be used for the further expansion of the policy of deporting Azerbaijanis from these territories. To this end, the Armenians secured the adoption, on 23 December 1947, of a special decision by the Council of Ministers of the USSR on the resettlement of collective farm workers and other Azerbaijanis from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Araks lowlands in Azerbaijan. Thus, in 1948-1953 150,000 Azerbaijanis living in the Soviet Armenia were deported, by hundreds of thousands, from their homes, to vacate lands for the Armenian newcomers from the Middle East.

All this further encouraged the appetite of the Armenian nationalists. In the late 1980's they put forward new territorial claims to its neighbor, instigating conflict in the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Under the guise of the confrontation it provoked, Armenia succeeded in driving away over a million Azerbaijanis, including more than 250 thousand from Armenia proper, from their homes. In 1990's Armenians perpetrated crimes of war and other brutalities, including the notorious massacre of the civilian population of the town of Khojaly in 1992, when over 600 people were slaughtered in one night.

Armenians, who cleansed the surrounding territories, in their quest of territorial expansion, have the audacity of claiming a status of a "genocide victim". They persistently play the factor of their ethnic Diaspora in many countries around the globe, seeking foreign governments' official recognition of their version of reality.

Yet, the trends of history are unmistakable, more and more countries witness firsthand that it was Armenia who brought policy of armed aggression, ethnic cleansing, and genocide into the new century.

In his address to the nation on the occasion the Day of Genocide of the Azerbaijanis on March 30<sup>th</sup>, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev reiterated the fact that "Leaderships of countries that have a significant influence on world politics, large sections of the public, international organizations increasingly recognize the Azerbaijani realities and openly regard Armenia as the aggressor state".

The President honoured the memory of the victims of the genocide and wished the Azerbaijani people every success in the solution of national goals.

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