



MISSION OF AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Press release - Special issue

31 March 2006

Remembering the Victims of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis

Every March 31 millions of Azerbaijanis around the globe commemorate the tragedy of their people, oppressed and persecuted through the last two centuries.

It started with the expulsion of Azerbaijanis by Armenians, who were settled in the ancestral Azerbaijani lands, following the peace treaty of 1828 that ended the Russian-Persian wars.

In 1905 the Armenians began committing atrocities against Azerbaijanis. Violence of the next two years claimed thousands of Azerbaijani lives in the regions of Irevan, Zangazur, Goycha, Nakhchivan, Garabagh, Ganja and Baku.

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.

In 1919 and 1920 the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan marked the day of sorrow on March 31. 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.

In 1948-1953 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, using the opportunity provided by weakening the Kremlin authority, 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 from their homes over a million Azerbaijanis, including more than 200 thousand from Armenia proper. 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 ethnically cleansed the surrounding territories, in their quest of territorial expansion, have the audacity of claiming a status of "genocide victim". They persistently play the factor of their 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.

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 31st as the Day of Genocide of the Azerbaijanis.

* * * * *