

STATEMENTS

- The Statement of the Chairman of Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Azerbaijani SSR E.Gafarova (January 21, 1990)
- Statement of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 17th anniversary of the tragedy on January 20, 1990 (January 19, 2007)
- The statement Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 21th Anniversary of the Tragedy of January 20, 1990 (January 19, 2011)
- The Statement of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 22th anniversary of the tragedy of January 20, 1990. (January 19, 2012)
- Azerbaijani ombudsman issues statement on 26th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 15, 2016)
- US Congressman issues statement on 26th anniversary of 20 January (January 30, 2016)
- US Congressman makes statement on January 20 and Khojaly tragedies (February 4, 2016)
- Azerbaijani ombudsperson issues statement on 27th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 12, 2017)
- Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 28th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 15, 2018)
- Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 29th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 11, 2019)
- Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 30th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 15, 2020)
- US congressman issues statement on 30th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 15, 2020)
- Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 31st anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 19, 2021)
- Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 32nd anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 19, 2022)
- Azerbaijani Ombudsperson urges international community to conduct legal assessment of January 20 tragedy (January 19, 2023)
- Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 34th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 19, 2024)
- Azerbaijan's Human Rights Commissioner issues statement on 35th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 17, 2025)

The Statement of the Chairman of Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Azerbaijani SSR

E.Gafarova

(January 21, 1990)

On behalf of the Azerbaijani people, all citizens of the republic I make the resolute protest in connection with the rough violation of the sovereignty of the Azerbaijani SSR and declaration by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of USSR of the State of Emergency in the capital of the republic - Baku city for implementation of which the cruel action against the peaceful population with using the hard military equipment and automatic weapon was carried out, which led to the numerous victims, among them were young people, women, old men and children.

I state with all responsibility, that the top bodies and administration of the Azerbaijani SSR didn't take the decision to declare the state of emergency in Baku and didn't give consent for adoption of such decision by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of USSR. Those bodies and officials of USSR, which took this decision and provided its implementation, are responsible for the shed blood.

The Azerbaijani people will never forgive anyone the death of its daughters and sons.

Baku. January 21, 1990

Statement of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 17th anniversary of the tragedy on January 20, 1990 (January 19, 2007)

Seventeen years have passed since the terrible day which was

the part of the genocide policy of Soviet Empire against Azerbaijan, resulted in gross violation of human rights and freedoms and remained in the history as January 20 tragedy. This tragedy is one of the most heinous crimes, violent and inhuman treatment and torture actions ever seen in the history of the XX century which resulted in and was observed as the gross violation of human rights reflected in the memory of Azerbaijani people. As it was not only an aggression against separate individuals, but a military aggression against Azerbaijani people.

Armenian separatists have intensified their violent policy beginning from 1987 in Nagorny Karabakh that is inseparable constituent part of Azerbaijan. Unlawful decision of the Supreme Council (parliament) of Armenia about connection of Nagorny Karabakh to Armenia led the events to critical level. While Azerbaijan waited for reaction from Kremlin, situation was developing in favor of Armenian separatists. The patience of our nation began to weaken by process of forced expulsion of all Azerbaijanis from Armenia beginning from 1988 as a result of ethnic cleansing. Numerous meetings were held all over the country.

At such a situation on the night from 19 to 20 January 1990 military forces and armed troops attacked Baku city, Sumgayit and other regions of Azerbaijan by order of Michael Gorbachov, USSR president. Hundreds of civilians who struggled for independence and protected their land, women, the elderly and children were killed and injured with special cruelty and violence, a lot of people were missing; many of the administrative and domestic buildings and transportation facilities were destroyed.

Soldiers attacked brutally and crushed even the ambulance cars and medical servants who came to help the injured. Trying to hide the number of the killed people they dissolved the corpses.

The former Soviet Union that considered it a democratic and legal state, having signed international human rights conventions at the same time allowed itself to violate the norms of the International Law and the Constitution of the USSR. On the night from 19 to 20 of January, 1990 unbelievable military actions were realized against Azerbaijan without any sanction of the Supreme Council of USSR and as well as the permission of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Azerbaijan SSR, grossly violating right to life that is one of the fundamental human rights acknowledged in the international documents and national legislation. Civil population including elderly, disabled people, women, and children were hideously murdered regardless of their national, ethnic, religious belonging, gender and age.

Although, with the aims of curtaining and legalizing these crimes the leaders of the former Soviet Union tried to explain the lawfulness of these actions as being intended to provide public safety and security, the unlawfulness and criminal nature of these actions were clear and indisputable.

Only in Baku city over 130 civilians were killed, more than 600 were injured and widespread destructions were carried out in accordance with the orders of the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Security Committee of the USSR.

January 20, 1990 can be considered to be the beginning of the terror policy and was one of the gravest strikes in the list of terror acts against Azerbaijani people. As a result of Armenian long term aggression against Azerbaijan the ethnic cleansing, followed by the genocide acts in Khojaly city and other settlements, has been carried out; twenty percent of the country territory have been occupied, more than one million people, every eighth of the country population, have become refugee or internally displaced person in their own country being withdrawn from Nagorny Karabakh and surrounding regions of Azerbaijan.

In order to affirm its power in Azerbaijan the empire which organized this terrible event faced the opposite results. This event had been exposed to the whole world as the evidence of the Soviet regime's cruelty, falsity and incompetence, as well as disappointed the belief to the Soviet Union, Soviet army and to the statement that Soviet people was an inseparable and friendly family. It strengthened our nation's struggle for liberty.

By initiative of the national leader Mr. Heydar Aliyev Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Majlis) gave the official, political and legal assessment to this event and proclaimed that this massacre was directed against nation's struggle for freedom and independence.

Nowadays we can state with great pride that the Soviet military forces using inhuman treatment against our people could not stop their fight for freedom and did not turn them back from the way on which we gave martyrs. The Alley of Martyrs and the monuments in the name of martyrs in cities and regions of the country had been founded to memorize their spirit and are now considered holy places for us and our guests.

This bloody event is an unforgettable and honorable page of our nation's history of struggle for liberty. The tragedy of the January 20 is also recognized as an example of heroism. All the great monuments founded in memory of martyrs, the land where they are committed to earth are regarded as holy place by every country citizen. Saving the memory of our martyrs we are honoring our people. To carry the great memory of martyrs through the generations is our noble duty. According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan from January 17, 2000 victims of this event were granted the honorary title of "January 20 Martyrs" for the outstanding example of heroism. According to the Order "On improving state care for the persons disabled during the events of January 20, 1990" dated January 15, 2003, the monthly payments for them have been raised. These persons also receive certain payments from the State Fund for Social Protection. The families of January 20 martyrs are also granted the presidential stipends.

Order given these days have affirmed plan of events concerning organization of the 17th anniversary of January 20 tragedy. Day of national sorrow will be commemorated as a symbol of Azerbaijan's struggle for independence and liberty. Our Diaspora in Europe and worldwide are also arranging commemoration days to attract the attention of international community to the January 20 tragedy.

The principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other International Acts on Human Rights were violated as a result of this crime against humanity and violence against peaceful inhabitants.

It is well known that one of the significant achievements of International Law is ensuring the protection of human rights at the international level. Thus, protection of human rights becomes not only national, but also international responsibility of every state. But unfortunately an international acknowledgement of this event as gross violation of human rights has not been given yet, although this tragedy directed against humanity has a

particular gravity and significance among acts of terror resulted in mass loss of life taken place in the world and we hope that this horrible crime of gross violation of fundamental human rights will get its international legal admission.

Our people will never forget the solidarity that was demonstrated by martyrs of the January 20 tragedy and will reinforce its national solidarity for today and future, for solving main issues of priority, for providing the primacy of law and protection of human rights.

E.Suleymanova
Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman)
of the Republic of Azerbaijan

January 19, 2007

**The statement Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of
Azerbaijan on the 21th Anniversary of the Tragedy of January 20, 1990
(January 19, 2011)**

21 years have passed since the terrible day which was the part of the genocide policy of Soviet Empire against Azerbaijan, resulted in gross violation of human rights and freedoms and remained in the history as 20 January tragedy. The tragedy that was one of the most terrible acts of torture, inhuman treatment committed against humanity in the XX century engraved in memory of our nation forever and became the day of honour as the first martyrdom summit of the independence of Azerbaijan.

At the night from 19 to 20 January, 1990, according to the Orders of the leaders of the USSR, armoured military forces consisting also of Armenian officers attacked Baku city, Sumgayit and in districts of Azerbaijan. Civil population was annihilated with special cruelty and torments, everything was destructed by tanks and armoured military cars.

Hundreds of civil people who struggled for independence and protected their land, including women, the elderly, and children were killed, injured or missing, a lot of administrative buildings, houses and transport facilities were seriously damaged.

In order to conceal the exact number of the killed persons the military offenders annihilated even their corpses. Only the next day people were informed about the state of emergency proclaimed in Baku by military commandant of Soviet Empire to Baku.

Only in Baku city over 130 civilians were killed, more than 600 were injured and extensive destructions were carried out as a result of military operations jointly conducted by the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Security Committee of the USSR.

During the attack prohibited bullets were used, ambulance cars and doctors were fired at; tens of medical servants were injured and killed.

Soviet Union violated the fundamental right of persons – the right to live, in mass scale, breaking the norms of international law and the constitution of the USSR and committing unprecedented military aggression against Azerbaijan.

This tragedy is one of the dark pages of the disgraced history of the Soviet authority as one of the grievous crimes, unprecedented savagery committed by the state against its citizens and as an act against the humanity. The slaughter committed by the Empire with the intention of affirming its dictatorship in Azerbaijan gave contrary result and strengthened persistent struggle of our people for the independence and demonstrated their determination towards it.

It was national leader Haydar Aliyev who for the first time gave political-legal appraisal to this tragedy. Yet on January 21,

1990 in his sharp statement he called criminals those who organized slaughters and demanded to give political assessment to the crimes committed in Baku and to punish the perpetrators.

On the recommendation of the national leader who proclaimed that date as the Day of National Mourning, the Azerbaijan Parliament (Milli Majlis) for the first time gave the official, political and legal assessment to this event and declared that this tragedy was against struggle for freedom and independence of the Azerbaijani people.

Every year 20 January is commemorated as the Day of National Mourning and the Azerbaijanis recall heroism of courageous sons of our nation with respect, besides a range of events are conducted all over the country in this regard, martyrs' families are given special allocation in accordance with the relevant Decree of the country President.

The Alley of Martyrs became a holy place and sanctuary for our nation, also a monument accusing the perpetrators of the tragedy. Each time when the foreign guests, public-political figures, the representatives of international organizations visit the Martyrs Avenue, they once more witness the offensive actions of the persons committed the slaughter against our people, and get information about the truth of Azerbaijan and this bloody tragedy.

By committing this crime Soviet Empire supported uncontrolled political forces of Armenia. As a result, the Armenian long term aggression, ethnic cleansing policy were carried out, massacres were committed against Azerbaijanis, twenty percent of the country territory was occupied, more than one million people became refugees and IDPs in their own country being banished from Nagorny-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts of Azerbaijan.

Today when all progressive humanity, nations strive for peace, development, Armenia carries out the policy of violence. Consequently, this has a negative impact on stability, peacebuilding and development processes in the South Caucasus and in Europe.

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev makes every effort for peaceful solution of the conflict. In the press conference held during the visit of the President of European Commission José Manuel Barroso to Baku, the President of Azerbaijan noted the fact that Azerbaijani lands are under long-term Armenian occupation is a matter of anxiety and this is a potential threat to regional security. He emphasized that the European Parliament adopted a Resolution in this regard, last year; this Resolution complies with the Resolutions of the UN, Council of Europe and other influential organizations.

He noted the resolution of the conflict in near future will lead to returning of Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs to their lands, to restoration of our territorial integrity recognized by the world and of security in the region.

Head of European Commission noted it is the time for peaceful resolution of the conflict, and European Commissioner makes its efforts towards it.

Upcoming days, the issue of resolution of Nagorny-Karabakh conflict will be an agenda item for discussion once more, restoration of violated rights of Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs will be raised in the session of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

As it is seen from the above mentioned, today influential international organisations recognize Armenia as an aggressor and demand vacation of Azerbaijani lands and restoration of Azerbaijani territorial integrity. World community already acknowledges the fairness of the Azerbaijani position, that its territorial integrity should be restored; refugees and IDPs should return their native lands.

One of the main achievements of modern international law was the raising protection of human rights and freedoms to the level of international cooperation, and creation of international maintenance in this regard. Thus, human rights exceed the boundaries of internal power of states and attain international importance.

The principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other International Acts on Human Rights were violated as a result of crime committed against civil population on January 20, 1990. It makes bringing the guilty to international legal responsibility inevitable. Nevertheless, international legal appraisal was not given to this bloody tragedy till now.

Recently, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon announced the priorities for UN for 2011. These priorities include inclusive and sustainable development, advancing human rights, improving responses to humanitarian crises, promoting a more safe and secure world, etc.

We believe that world community, international organizations will support the justified demands of Azerbaijan, considering these priorities and this horrible act of crime which was committed against our people, planned beforehand and accompanied with anti-humanism, anti-democracy and with mass violation of human rights will receive international recognition and the perpetrators will be punished soon.

Our people, who are persistent in their lawful demands, don't forget the unity demonstrated by the tragedy victims who fought for the national independence and will further strengthen the solidarity of the Azerbaijanis now and in future for sustainable development, solution of prior problems of our country, the Rule of Law, democratization, protection of human rights in the name of powerful Azerbaijan.

Prof. Elmira Suleymanova

The Commissioner for Human Rights
(Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan

19.01.2011

The Statement is addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, European Commission, Council of Europe, OSCE, International Ombudsman Institute, European Ombudsman Institute and Asian Ombudsman Association, International Peace Bureau, International Peace Federation, ombudspersons of foreign countries, embassies of Azerbaijan abroad, as well as the foreign embassies in Azerbaijan, and organizations of Azerbaijani Diaspora.

**The Statement of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 22th anniversary of the tragedy of January 20, 1990.
(January 19, 2012)**

As the years have passed since January 20, 1990 different aspects, the essence of that bloody event, identity and the aims of the perpetrators become much clearer.

At the night from 19 to 20 January 1990 armoured vehicles, military forces, entered Baku city, Sumgayit, different regions of Azerbaijan without any prior notification. As a result the norms of international law, relevant provisions of the Constitutions of former USSR and Azerbaijan SSR were grossly violated. Our nation who protested against never ending territorial claims of Armenian nationalist against Azerbaijan Republic and fought for their land, were subjected to special cruelty and torments.

As a result of special military operation held following the Orders of the leaders of the USSR, the military forces entering Baku from different directions killed 132 civilians with special cruelty regardless their nationality, age and sex. In the capital, surrounding settlements, and districts 612 innocent persons were injured, hundreds of persons went missing, 841 persons were imprisoned unlawfully.

Baku reminding front-line, being under siege, and surrounded with military forces and vehicles was destroyed, hundreds unarmed, peaceful persons including women, elderly, and children were annihilated, administrative buildings, houses and transport facilities were seriously damaged. In order to conceal committed savagery the exact number of the killed persons, inhuman war criminals annihilated even their corpses.

During the attack prohibited weapons and supplies were used. Soldiers, who lost their sense of mercy, killed seriously wounded persons on spot. Even ambulance cars and doctors were fired at; medical servants were injured and killed.

22 years have passed since the terrible day which was the part of the genocide policy of Soviet Empire against Azerbaijan, resulted in gross violation of human rights and freedoms and remained in the history as 20 January tragedy. This tragedy that was one of the most terrible acts of violence, torture, inhuman treatment committed against humanity in the XX century engraved in memory of our nation forever.

Soviet Union leaders who carried out “perestroika” policy, committed unprecedented military aggression against Azerbaijan, grossly violated the supreme right of persons – the right to live, breaking the norms of international law. This terrible event was the beginning of the organized terror policy and one of the gravest blows among the terror acts committed against the Azerbaijani people. By committing this crime Soviet Empire supported uncontrolled political forces of Armenia. As a result, Armenian long term aggression, ethnic cleansing policy, massacres were committed against Azerbaijanis, twenty percent of the country territory was occupied, more than one million people became refugees and IDPs in their own country being withdrawn from Armenia, Nagorny Karabakh and seven surrounding rayons of Azerbaijan.

The savagery committed by the state against its citizens committed by the Empire with the intention of affirming its dictatorship in Azerbaijan gave contrary result and strengthened the persistent struggle of our nation for the independence.

In his sharp statement National Leader Heydar Aliyev demanded to give political appraisal to the crimes committed in Baku and to punish perpetrators yet on January 21, 1990. With the recommendation of the National Leader who proclaimed that date as the Day of National Mourning, the Azerbaijan Parliament (Milli Majlis) for the first time gave the official, political and legal assessment to this event and declared that this tragedy was against struggle for freedom and independence of the Azerbaijani people.

Every year 20 January is marked as the Day of National Mourning and the Azerbaijanis recall heroism of courageous sons of our nation with respect. Plan of Actions with regard to conduction of series of relevant events in capital and regions was approved this year as well. According to Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the honorary title of “Martyrs of January 20” was conferred on victims of the tragedy for the outstanding example of heroism. According to the relevant Decree “On improving state care for the persons who became disabled as a result of the events of January 20, 1990”, the monthly allocations for them have been raised and this care is being continued.

President Ilham Aliyev who successfully continues the political course of National Leader, attaches special attention to honouring 20 January martyrs and to solution of social problems of their family members. The persons who became disabled during this tragedy are provided with relevant allocations from State Social Protection Foundation annual budget, as well as with the presidential pensions in accordance with the Presidential Decree from 19 January, 2011.

Our Diaspora organizations in Europe and worldwide also organize different actions, ceremonies, commemoration events to draw the attention of international community to the January 20 tragedy and to the realities of Azerbaijan in whole.

Azerbaijan and Turkish Diasporas in USA addressed a letter to Congress, drawing the attention to 20 January tragedy asked to commemorate the victims of the tragedy.

Mayor of Washington Vincent Gray issued statement on the anniversary of the slaughter committed in Azerbaijan on January 20, 1990 and on commemorating martyrs.

The victims of the tragedy were buried in the Martyrs Alleys in Baku and in regions of the country that became a holy place and sanctuary for us.

Our nation don't forget the unity demonstrated by the tragedy victims who fought for the national independence and will further strengthen the solidarity of the Azerbaijanis now and in future for sustainable development, solution of prior problems of our country, the Rule of Law, democratization, protection of human rights in the name of powerful Azerbaijan.

One of the main achievements of modern international law was the raising protection of human rights and freedoms to the level of international cooperation, and creation of international maintenance in this regard. Thus, human rights exceed the boundaries of internal power of states and attain international importance. The principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other International Acts on Human Rights were violated as a result of crime committed against civil population on January 20, 2009.

Tragedy of January 20 is terrible crime among the terror acts resulted in mass annihilation of people according to its essence and scale. Nevertheless, international legal appraisal was not given to this bloody tragedy till now.

We once more declare that this slaughter planned in advance and committed against our people, with the aim of total or partial annihilation of people on the ground of their ethnic origin and constituting the crime of genocide under international and domestic law was accompanied with gross and mass violation of human rights.

We hope that the world community, international organizations will support the justified demands of Azerbaijan, and this grievous crime against humanity will receive international recognition as a genocide act and the perpetrators will be punished soon.

Elmira Suleymanova

Commissioner for Human Rights
(Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan

19.01.2012

The Statement is addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, United Nations Security Council, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, OSCE, Council of Europe, International Ombudsman Institute, European Ombudsman Institute and Asian Ombudsman Association, International Peace Bureau, International Peace Federation, Embassies of Azerbaijan abroad, as well as the foreign Embassies in Azerbaijan, Ombudspersons of foreign countries and organizations of Azerbaijani Diaspora.

<http://www.ombudsman.gov.az/view.php?lang=en&menu=95&id=1025>

**Azerbaijani ombudsman issues statement on 26th anniversary of January 20 tragedy
(January 15, 2016)**

Azerbaijani Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) Elmira Suleymanova has issued a statement on the 26th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy, the Ombudsman's Office told APA.

“On the night of January 19-20, 1990, military units and armored vehicles of the Soviet Army, without warning, burst into Baku, Sumgayit and other cities and regions of Azerbaijan. Under the instructions of the former Soviet leaders, 147 civilians regardless of nationality, age and gender were killed, 744 were wounded, hundreds went missing and 841 people were arrested illegally. Even after declaring a state of emergency on 20 January, 21 more people were killed. Soldiers attacked even the ambulances and medical servants who came to help the wounded, they were also killed and wounded,” the statement reads.

The statement says that one main task lying ahead is to bring the truth about the January 20 tragedy to the world community.

“Though, as a result of this crime against humanity, the provisions of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other international legal documents on human rights were flagrantly violated, the January 20 tragedy which is one of the most horrible crimes of XX century was not legally assessed and the perpetrators and benefactors of this crime have not been yet punished,” the statement reads.

“There are sufficient legal documents and norms to declare the events of January 20 as a crime against humanity – one of the most serious forms of international crimes in accordance with the international law. There are sufficient grounds to bring the personnel who committed these atrocities, those who gave order in this regard and leaders of former Soviet Union to justice,” said the statement.

“We hope that the world community and international organizations will support the right demands of Azerbaijan, this bloody act will soon receive its international legal assessment as a crime against humanity, the perpetrators will be punished,” the statement said.

The statement has been sent to the UN Secretary General, UN Security Council, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, European Commission, OSCE, Council of Europe, Institute of International and European Ombudsmen, Asian Ombudsman Association, International Peace Bureau, human rights commissioners of various countries, Azerbaijan’s diplomatic missions abroad, diplomatic missions of foreign countries in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani Diaspora organizations.

**US Congressman issues statement on 26th anniversary of 20 January
(January 30, 2016)**

Member of the U.S. House of Representatives and Co-Chair of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus Steve Cohen made a statement on the 26th anniversary of 20 January tragedy.

The statement provides detailed information about the tragedy.

The US congressman said that on 20 January 1990, Soviet troops stormed Azerbaijan's capital city of Baku and attacked civilians in the city.

The congressman said that the January 20 tragedy united the Azerbaijani people and resulted with the declaration of independence in Azerbaijan. He also said Azerbaijan turned to rapidly developing country, adding democratic values and free market economy were established in the country.

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**US Congressman makes statement on January 20 and Khojaly tragedies
(February 4, 2016)**

US Congressman from New Jersey Donald Payne has made a statement on January 20 and Khojaly tragedies. He said he would like to recognize January 20, 1990 as “Black January”, adding Soviet troops invaded the capital city of Baku and surrounding areas killing tens and injuring hundreds of civilians.

He also asked congressmen to join him in recognizing the horrific atrocities that took place during the month of February in Khojaly, Azerbaijan, 24 years ago. On that day, Payne said, more than 600 people, mostly elderly men, women and children, were brutally killed.

The Congressman also described Azerbaijan as a strong ally of the United States in a strategically important region of the world.

Yusif Babanli
Special Correspondent
AZERTAC

Azerbaijani ombudsperson issues statement on 27th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 12, 2017)

Azerbaijani Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsperson) Elmira Suleymanova has issued a statement regarding the 27th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

caterpillars of the heavy military vehicles. War criminals full of hatred against the Azerbaijanis destroyed the corps in order to hide their number.

The energy bloc of the state television was exploded, as a result of special operations held by the USSR Committee of State Security in order to hide from the population the official information about entrance of the armed to the city.

As a result of this crime against humanity, the provisions of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other international legal documents on human rights were severely violated, nevertheless, the tragedy of 20th January, 1990, one of the horrible crimes by its nature and scale committed in XX century was not legally assessed at the international level, the perpetrators and benefactors of this crime have not been yet punished.

Under the international law, the tragedy of 20th January, 1990 must be interpreted as a crime against humanity. According to the Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court ‘crime against humanity’ means extermination; forced disappearance of persons; other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great sufferings, serious injury to body, to mental or physical health are defined as elements of the crime.

At that period, on behalf of all Azerbaijanis, the most relevant remarkable statement was made by the National leader Haydar Aliyev, whereas he demanded legally assess the crime against humanity committed on the 20th January and punish all offenders. The direct prosecutions of the head of former Soviet State by Heydar Aliyev, was an evidence of his courage and love to own people.

It should be noted the bloodshed couldn’t break the will of the people and this fight for freedom resulted in re-gaining the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991.

In 1993, at the initiative of Heydar Aliyev, who returned to the country’s leadership, the Parliament declared January 20 as a Day of Mourning, which is commemorated in the country each year.

Tragedy victims are buried in different cemeteries of Baku and regions of the country, which turned into the holy place for the visitors. Appreciating the national freedom movement, our people commemorate own martyrs with deep respect.

According to the Presidential Decree, country citizens killed during those bloody event were awarded with honorary title “Martyr of the 20th January”, and in line with the Decree on “The Increasing of the State care to the persons who became disabled during 20th January events” different actions are being taken and these persons are provided with relevant allowance. Moreover, martyr’s families are provided with Presidential allowance.

The Soviet state violating the international legal norms, supported Armenia with this crime, as a result of which a long term Armenian aggression, ethnic cleansing and massacre were committed against Azerbaijan,

twenty percent of our lands was occupied, people were withdrawn by force from Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, which is an integral part of Azerbaijan, and seven surrounding districts of the country and a million of them became refugees and IDPs.

Since 2 April 2016, the Armenian armed forces abruptly started intensive shootings from the occupied Azerbaijani territories, as well as from the territory of the Republic of Armenia on the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, numerous dwellings, schools and other social objects along the frontline, also the positions of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces on the line of contact, by heavy artillery and big caliber weapons. As a result, civilians, including women and children were killed and severely injured. Thus, international legal documents, including provisions of the Geneva Conventions were grossly violated by the armed forces of Armenia committing such war crimes. These cases were witnessed by the representatives of international organizations and international journalists visiting our country.

The Azerbaijani side always strives for peaceful settlement of this conflict. The country President Ilham Aliyev repeatedly and resolutely states from influential international platforms the necessity of solution of the conflict within the territorial integrity of our country and withdrawal of the occupant armed forces from the Azerbaijani territories.

Like previous years, the Action Plan on “Commemorating the 27th anniversary of the tragedy of January 20” has been approved with relevant Decree and it is being implemented.

Raising awareness of the international community about the realities of Azerbaijan, including the tragedy of January 20 is one of our main duties. We provided the comprehensive information about the genocide and terror acts against our people, April fights, as well as January 20 at numerous international events we participated in, the relevant statements were sent to international organizations.

Pursuant to the international law, there is sufficient legislative framework for the assessment of the events occurred on January 20, 1990, as a crime against humanity. Furthermore, there are also enough grounds for bringing the military servants committed those violent acts, as well as their commanders, the former Soviet Administration to the criminal responsibility, in particular.

Considering all the above mentioned, we do hope that the international community, international organizations will support the just demands of Azerbaijani people and this bloody event will get its international legal recognition and the perpetrators won't remain unpunished.

Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 28th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 15, 2018)

Azerbaijani Commissioner for Human Rights (ombudsman) Elmira Suleymanova has issued a statement on the 29th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

The statement reads: “At the night from January 19 to 20, 1990, the Soviet armed forces, as well as armored vehicles entered Baku, Sumgayit, also other cities and rayons of the country unexpectedly. Landing troops brought by military vessels with the use of tanks and other military equipment shot at civilians. Eventually, international legal norms, the relevant provisions of the former USSR, as well as of Azerbaijan SSR constitutions were severely violated and a crime was committed against humanity and our multinational people rose to defend their lands.

Military forces entered the Baku city, killed 147 unarmed civilians including the elderly, women and children mercilessly regardless their nationality, age and sex. 744 innocent persons were injured in the capital city, surrounding settlements, and in districts, the hundreds were went missing and 841 persons were unlawfully imprisoned. Even Ambulances and physicians carrying the injured persons were also shot at; as a result, medical staff became martyr and was injured. After declaration of a state of emergency on January 20, 21 people were killed. The prohibited weapons and supplies were used during these attacks, immeasurable destructions were happened. The energy bloc of the state television was exploded, in order to hide from the population the official information about entrance of the armed to the city.

At that period, on behalf of all Azerbaijanis, the most relevant remarkable statement was made by the National leader Heydar Aliyev, whereas he demanded legally assess the crime against humanity committed on January 20 and punish all offenders.

This bloodshed couldn't break the will of the people and this fight for freedom resulted in re-gaining the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991. At the initiative of Heydar Aliyev special session of Milli Mejlis was held and political-legal assessment was given to this bloody event. January 20 is commemorated as a Day of Mourning in the country; martyrs are remembered with respect each year.

According to the Presidential Decree, country citizens killed during that bloody event were awarded with honorary title “Martyr of the January 20”, and in line with the Decree on “The Increasing of the State care to the persons who became disabled during January 20 events” different measures are being taken and these persons are provided with relevant allowances. Moreover, martyr's families are provided with Presidential pensions.

Like previous years, the Action Plan on “Commemorating the 28th anniversary of the tragedy of January 20” has been approved with relevant Decree and it is being implemented.

As a result of this tragedy against humanity, the provisions of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international legal documents on human rights were severely violated, nevertheless, the tragedy of January 20, 1990, one of the horrible crimes by its nature and scale committed in XX century was not legally assessed at the international level, the initiators and perpetrators of this crime have not been yet punished.

Under the international law, the tragedy of January 20, 1990 must be interpreted as a crime against humanity. Thus, according to the Article 7 of the International Criminal Court ‘crime against humanity’ means extermination; forced disappearance of persons; other inhuman acts of a similar character intentionally causing great sufferings, serious injury to body, to mental or physical health are defined as elements of the crime.

At that time the Soviet state violating the international legal norms, supported Armenia with this crime, as a result of which a long term Armenian aggression, ethnic cleansing, massacre were committed against Azerbaijan, twenty percent of our lands was occupied, innocent Azerbaijani population was withdrawn by force from Armenia, also from Nagorno-Karabakh, which is an integral part of Azerbaijan, and seven adjacent districts of the country, which resulted in gross violation of fundamental rights of civilians and up to now over a million of our compatriots live as refugees and IDPs.

The Azerbaijani side always strives and makes initiatives for peaceful settlement of this conflict. The country President Ilham Aliyev repeatedly and resolutely states from influential international as well as UN General Assembly platforms, the necessity of solution of the conflict within the territorial integrity of our country and withdrawal of the occupant armed forces from the Azerbaijani territories.

The above mentioned facts show that there are enough legal documents for interpreting event of January 20, as a crime against humanity which is one of the most severe types of international crimes, also there are sufficient grounds for bringing the persons responsible for the execution of this massacre and first of all the leaders of the Soviet state of that time to the criminal responsibility under the international law.

This bloody event should be given international legal recognition and the perpetrators should get deserved punishment with the support of the international organizations and international community to the just demands of the Azerbaijani people.

Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 29th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 11, 2019)

Azerbaijani Commissioner for Human Rights (ombudsman) Elmira Suleymanova has issued a statement on the 29th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

The statement reads: Twenty-nine years pass from the bloody 20 January tragedy. This unforgettable crime against humanity is commemorated each time with a heavy heart. This bloody event, engraved on the memories as Black January, is both the day of commemoration of our martyrs and the day of solidarity, pride and honor of our people fighting for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. These events once again demonstrated that our people are determined to fight for the independence and restoration of their violated rights.

Thus, as a result of the support by former USSR leadership to the raising Armenian separatism in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, which is an integral part of Azerbaijan and biased position towards our country, gradual removal of the departments and organizations of the mentioned oblast from the subordination of our republic, deportation of the Azerbaijanis from their historical-ethnic lands in Armenia, exposure of compatriots to severe torture and violence exhausted our people's patience. 20 January massacre was committed upon the instruction of the Soviet government of the period in order to suppress the rightly protest of our people, to prevent the expanding liberation movement in Azerbaijan.

According to the official facts, we report that in the night from the 19th to the 20th January 1990, troops of the Soviet army were deployed to Baku and Sumgait, other cities and regions of the country as well, fired the people using descent groups brought by military vessels, tanks and other heavy military equipment, thus international law norms, provisions of the former USSR and Azerbaijan SSR Constitutions were grossly violated, a violent crime against humanity was committed against our multinational people which stood in defense of freedom of their homeland and their own rights.

Armed forces entered Baku, killed 168 unarmed civilians mercilessly regardless of their nationality, age or sex, including children, women and elderly, 744 peaceful, innocent persons in the capital, suburban settlements and surrounding areas were injured, hundreds of people went missing, 841 persons were illegally arrested. Even the ambulances and physicians carrying the injured persons were subjected to fire, therefore medical staff members became martyrs or were injured. Use of prohibited weapons and supplies resulted in immeasurable destructions. The energy bloc of the state television was exploded as a result of the sabotage organized by the USSR Committee of State Security with the purpose of concealing the event from the population.

At that period, a harsh statement was made by the National leader Heydar Aliyev in the city of Moscow on behalf of the Azerbaijani people and he demanded legal assessment of the massacre committed against the Azerbaijani people on January 20 and punishment of the perpetrators.

It should be noted that those events couldn't break the will of our people and the fight for freedom resulted in restoring the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991.

At the initiative of the president Heydar Aliyev special session of the Milli Majlis was held and this bloodshed was given its political-legal assessment. Every year the date of January 20 is commemorated as the National Day

of Mourning in our Republic and on this day the martyrs are remembered by hundreds of thousands people with deep respect.

According to the Presidential Decree, citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan being of different nationalities killed during the tragedy were awarded with honorary title “Martyr of the January 20”, and different measures are taken in accordance with the Decree on “Increasing the State care to the persons who became disabled during January 20 events”, and these persons are entitled to relevant allowances by the state, and the martyrs’ families are provided with Presidential pensions.

As in previous years, the Action Plan on “Commemorating the 29th Anniversary of the January 20 tragedy” has been approved this year and is being implemented by the relevant Decree aiming to draw the international community’s attention to those bloody events.

This horrible tragedy caused the massacre of the civilian population. Consequently, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international legal documents were grossly violated. Nevertheless, despite being one of the most horrible crimes of the 20th century for its nature and scale, January 20 events has not been given international legal assessment so far, those ordering and perpetrators of the bloodshed have not been punished.

Under the international law, the tragedy of January 20 should be classified as a crime against humanity. Thus, according to the article 7 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, extermination, enforced disappearance of persons, other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great sufferings, serious injury to body, to mental or physical health are classified as crimes against humanity.

At that time the leaders of the Soviet state supported Armenia with that crime grossly violating the international legal norms, which resulted in the long-lasting Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan, ethnic cleansing, genocides were committed, twenty percent of our country territories was occupied, local Azerbaijani population was forcibly expelled from the territory of Armenia, as well as from the Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts, which are integral part of our republic. These actions resulted in massive violation of the fundamental rights of the civilian population and still more than one million compatriots live as refugees and IDPs.

The Azerbaijani side constantly strives for the peaceful settlement of the conflict, proposes initiatives. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has stated the crucial importance of the peaceful settlement of the conflict only within the territorial integrity of our republic, withdrawal of the occupant forces from the Azerbaijani lands repeatedly and resolutely in the platforms of the influential international organizations, including UN General Assembly. It is reflected in the corresponding decisions of the influential international organizations, including European Parliament resolution adopted on December 12, 2018, in which the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan was emphasized once more.

It should be mentioned that there are enough legal documents to classify the January 20 events committed twenty-nine years ago as a crime against humanity, being one of the most grave kind of the international crimes, at the same time sufficient evidences for bringing to justice the persons who ordered and committed this massacre and first of all, the leaders of the Soviet state of that period.

Impunity of persons committed such kind of deeds is contrary to the targeted universal priorities, UN Principles and Sustainable Development Goals.

We call the world community and international organizations to support justified demands of the Azerbaijani people and, in order to bring the perpetrators of this crime against humanity to deserved punishment, to assist in giving this bloody action an international legal assessment.

The Statement is addressed to the UN Secretary-General, UN Security Council, UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Office of High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Human Rights Council, UNICEF, UNESCO, European Union, European Council, OSCE, International and European Ombudsman Institutions, Asian Ombudsman Association, European Network of Ombudsmen for Children, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Network of Ombudsmen Offices in its member states, International Peace Bureau, foreign ombudsmen, embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foreign embassies to Azerbaijan, also the Azerbaijani Diasporas.

Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 30th anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 15, 2020)

Azerbaijani Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) Sabina Aliyeva has issued a statement on the 30th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

The statement reads: “Thirty years pass from the bloody 20 January tragedy, as a result of which hundreds of Azerbaijani compatriots were killed, injured and went missing in Baku and other regions of the country. Since 1987, as a result of the support by former USSR leadership to the raising Armenian separatism in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, which is an integral part of Azerbaijan and biased position towards our country, deportation of the Azerbaijanis from their historical-ethnic lands in Armenia, exposure of compatriots to severe torture and violence exhausted our people’s patience. 20 January massacre was committed upon the instruction of the Soviet government of the period in order to suppress the rightly protest of our people, to prevent the expanding liberation movement in Azerbaijan.

Over the night from 19 to 20 January 1990, the Soviet army were deployed to Baku and Sumgait, other cities and regions of the country as well, fired the people using descent groups brought by military vessels, tanks and other heavy military equipment, thus international law norms, provisions of the former USSR and Azerbaijan SSR Constitutions were grossly violated, a violent crime against humanity was committed against our multinational people which stood in defense of freedom of their homeland and their own rights.

Armed forces entered Baku, killed 150 unarmed civilians mercilessly regardless of their nationality, age or sex, including children, women and elderly, 744 peaceful, innocent persons in the capital, suburban settlements and surrounding areas were injured, hundreds of people went missing, 841 persons were illegally arrested. Even the ambulances and physicians carrying the injured persons were subjected to fire, therefore medical staff members became martyrs or were injured. Use of prohibited weapons and supplies resulted in immeasurable destructions. The energy bloc of the state television was exploded as a result of the sabotage organized by the USSR Committee of State Security with the purpose of concealing the event from the population.

At that period, a harsh statement was made by National leader Heydar Aliyev in the city of Moscow on behalf of the Azerbaijani people and he demanded legal assessment of the massacre committed against the Azerbaijani people on January 20 and punishment of the perpetrators. At the initiative of President Heydar Aliyev special session of the Milli Majlis was held and this bloodshed was given its political-legal assessment.

There are enough legal grounds to hold accountable perpetrators of the January 20 tragedy. This is above all is the fact of violation of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international legal documents. At the same time, under the international law, the tragedy of January 20 should be classified as a crime against humanity. Thus, according to the article 7 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, extermination, enforced disappearance of persons, other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great sufferings, serious injury to body, to mental or physical health are classified as crimes against humanity.

According to the Presidential Decree, citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan being of different nationalities killed during the tragedy were awarded with honorary title “Martyr of the January 20”, and different measures are taken in accordance with the Decree on “Increasing the State care to the persons who became disabled during January 20 events”, and these persons are entitled to relevant allowances by the state, and the martyrs’ families are provided with Presidential pensions.

As in previous years, the Action Plan on “Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the January 20 tragedy” has been approved this year and is being implemented by the relevant Decree aiming to draw the international community’s attention to those bloody events.

It should be mentioned that there are enough legal documents to classify the January 20 events committed 30 years ago as a crime against humanity, being one of the most grave kind of the international crimes, at the same time sufficient evidences for bringing to justice the persons who ordered and committed this massacre and first of all, the leaders of the Soviet state of that period.

We would also like to draw the international community’s attention to the consequences of Armenia’s aggression against Azerbaijan and the fact of violation of the fundamental rights of more than one million of our compatriots who have become refugees and IDPs.

Azerbaijan’s position on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh is that this conflict must be resolved within the territorial integrity of our country and based on the principles of international law, all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan must be unconditionally liberated, and return of the refugees and IDPs to their native lands must be ensured. The Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the OSCE, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other organizations have adopted relevant decisions and resolutions supporting Azerbaijan’s fair and rightful position on resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Partnership Priorities document signed between the EU and Azerbaijan also expressed great support for Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of its borders.

We call on the world community and international organizations to assist in giving this bloody action, which is a gross violation of human rights, an international legal assessment.”

The statement has been sent to the UN Secretary-General, UN Security Council, UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Office of High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Human Rights Council, UNICEF, UNESCO, European Union, European Council, OSCE, International and European Ombudsman Institutions, Asian Ombudsman Association, European Network of Ombudsmen for Children, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Network of Ombudsmen Offices in its member states, International Peace Bureau, foreign ombudsmen, embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foreign embassies to Azerbaijan, also the Azerbaijani Diasporas.

**US congressman issues statement on 30th anniversary of January 20 tragedy
(January 15, 2020)**

Paul Gosar, a member of the US House of Representatives, has made a statement on the 30th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

The statement reads: “I rise today in remembrance of the 30th anniversary of the events in Azerbaijan culminating in what is now known as Black January. In January 1990, the former U.S.S.R. attempted to continue to suppress freedom and impose its political will on the people of Azerbaijan. At that time, however, the people of Azerbaijan decided that they had enough of Soviet control and resisted.

At night, the Red Army marched into Baku to stem the movements for equality and freedom. While the Azeris used peaceful protests and calls for freedom, the Soviets responded with guns and tanks. These actions resulted in 147 civilian deaths, with hundreds more wounded and imprisoned.

The Azeris had seen what happened to prior independence movements in the Soviet Union, yet they persevered on. This tragedy only emboldened them in their cause, carrying on the mission of their countrymen which culminated in their August 1991 independence.

Since this monumental declaration, Azerbaijan has been a beacon of freedom in the region as well as a friend and ally of the United States. At this time, we memorialize those fallen and celebrate the continued strength of the Republic of Azerbaijan. I strongly urge my colleagues to recognize Black January and join in the honoring of allies in Azerbaijan and their quest for liberation.”

Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 31st anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 19, 2021)

Azerbaijani Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) Sabina Aliyeva has issued a statement on the 31st anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

The statement reads: “The tragedy of January 20, committed 31 years ago as a result of the inhumane and treacherous policy of the USSR leadership against the Azerbaijani people, is engraved in the memory of our people as the night of Black January. It is also a date that demonstrates the struggle, inflexibility and pride of our people, who strive for their freedom and independence.

At that time the people were protesting against the biased policy of the USSR leadership, demanding the investigation of crimes committed against Azerbaijanis in Armenia, also by separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh and the punishment of criminals. The massacre of 20 January was committed by the former USSR leadership in order to suppress the people’s fair voice, as well as to prevent the possibility of independence of Azerbaijan. The day before the incident, the energy bloc of the Azerbaijan State Television was exploded as a result of a provocation organized by the USSR Committee of State Security in order to hide information about the planned event from the population and the world community in general.

On the night from 19 to 20 January 1990, the Soviet army were deployed in Baku, Sumgait, and other cities and districts of the country without declaring a state of emergency and fired on civilians using various weapons. Armed forces killed 150 unarmed civilians mercilessly regardless of their nationality, age or sex, including children, women and elderly, 744 peaceful, innocent people were wounded in the capital city of Baku and surrounding areas, hundreds went missing and 841 persons were unlawfully imprisoned. Even the ambulances and physicians carrying the injured persons were fired on, therefore medical staff became martyrs or were injured. 21 people were killed after declaration of a state of emergency on January 20.

Thus, the international law norms and fundamental human rights were grossly violated, a violent crime against humanity was committed against our multinational people which stood in defense of freedom of the homeland and its own rights.

On January 21, 1990 a harsh statement related to these bloody events was made by national leader Heydar Aliyev in the city of Moscow on behalf of the Azerbaijani people and he demanded legal assessment of the massacre committed against our people on January 20 and punishment of the perpetrators.

This horrible crime against humanity is a gross violation of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international legal instruments. According to international law, the tragedy of 20 January must be interpreted as a crime against humanity. Under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the following acts interpreted as a crime against humanity: murder; enforced disappearance; persecution on the political, national, ethnic, cultural or gender grounds; torture and other inhumane acts intentionally causing great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

The tragedy of January 20 committed by the Soviet army against our people did not break the will of our people, and the struggle for freedom resulted in the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence in 1991.

At the initiative of President Heydar Aliyev, who came to power for the second time in 1993 at the request of the people, a special session of the Milli Majlis was held and this bloodshed was given its political-legal assessment. The date of January 20 has been declared as the National Day of Mourning in our Republic. Every year on this day the martyrs are remembered by hundreds of thousands of people with deep respect.

According to the Presidential Decree, citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan killed during the tragedy were awarded the honorary title “Martyr of the January 20”, as well as state care continues for persons disabled during the events of January 20, 1990.

It should be noted that at that time, as a result of the support of the Soviet Government to Armenia, ethnic cleansing, genocide were committed against Azerbaijan, twenty percent of our lands were occupied, innocent Azerbaijani population was withdrawn by force from Armenia, also from Nagorno-Karabakh, which is an integral part of Azerbaijan, and seven adjacent districts of the country, which resulted in gross violation of fundamental rights of one million civilians. Refusing to resolve the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict peacefully and seeking to occupy new territories, Armenia committed provocations directed at the positions of our army in July and August 2020, violated the ceasefire in late September 2020 and fired on positions of Azerbaijani Army and civilian settlements. As a result of this, many military servicemen and civilians were killed and wounded, and civilian facilities, including residential buildings, were severely damaged. In response, the Azerbaijani Army under the leadership of Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev launched a counter-offensive operation on September 27, 2020, and liberated most of our territories from occupation in a short period of time. On November 10, a historic document was signed formalizing the complete defeat of Armenia. With the liberation of our occupied lands and the opportunity for hundreds of thousands of civilians to return to their ancestral lands, their fundamental rights have been restored.

We would like to note with regret that, despite the gross violation of international legal instruments, as a result of the terrible act committed against humanity, one of the most horrible crimes of the 20th century for its nature and scale, January 20 events have not been given international legal assessment so far, those ordering and perpetrators of the bloodshed have not been punished.

There are quite sufficient grounds that events occurred on the 20th January can be interpreted as a crime against humanity, which is one of the gravest types of international crimes according to the principles of international law, as well as to hold criminally responsible the military personnel who committed these atrocities and perpetrators who ordered this massacre, then USSR administration, in particular.

We strongly believe that the perpetrators of this bloody crime will soon be brought to justice by giving an international legal assessment of the tragedy of January 20, 1990.

We urge international institutions and the international community, as a whole, to give legal assessment to this criminal act that is associated with severe violations of human rights and is a breach of international legal norms.”

This Statement is addressed to the UN Secretary-General, UN Security Council, UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Office of High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Human Rights Council, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, European Union, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, International and European Ombudsman Institutions, Asian Ombudsman Association, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Ombudsman Association of its member states, Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, International Peace Bureau, foreign ombudsmen and national human rights institutions, embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foreign embassies in Azerbaijan, also the Azerbaijani Diasporas.

Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 32nd anniversary of January 20 tragedy (January 19, 2022)

Azerbaijani Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) Sabina Aliyeva has issued a statement on the 32nd anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

The statement reads: “32 years have passed since the January 20 events, which entered as a heroic page to the history of the struggle for independence of Azerbaijan.

The January 20 events did not break the will and determination of the Azerbaijani people, on the contrary, those events united our people more closely for freedom and brought them closer to the path to independence.

From the late 1980s, Armenia pursued a policy of hatred, ethnic cleansing and genocide against Azerbaijanis, as well as asserted unlawful territorial claims to Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani people were outraged by the aggressive actions of Armenia and the support of the USSR leadership and therefore, expressed their strong protest. The deployment of troops against the civilian population in order to break the will of the Azerbaijani people led to massacres in Baku and Sumgayit cities, as well as in other cities and districts of the country. As a result of this crime against humanity, 150 civilians, including children, women and elderly were brutally killed, 744 people were wounded, and 841 persons were unlawfully imprisoned.

On January 21, 1990, despite all the pressures and hardships, demonstrating a political will, national leader, Heydar Aliyev made a harsh statement related to this crime committed by the USSR leadership.

The political-legal assessment to this bloody tragedy has been realized through the return of the national leader Heydar Aliyev to power. Thus, in 1994, at the special session of the Milli Mejlis, the decision "On the tragic events of January 20, 1990 in Baku" was adopted. It should be noted that social protection system for the families of the martyrs of January 20 and persons with disabilities in connection with these events was created by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

According to the international law, the events occurred on 20 January shall be interpreted as a crime against humanity, and the military personnel who ordered to commit this massacre and its perpetrators shall be held criminally liable. Under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the following acts interpreted as a crime against humanity: murder; enforced disappearance; persecution on the political, national, ethnic, cultural or gender grounds; torture and other inhumane acts intentionally causing great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

Azerbaijan has faced severe trials throughout history, bloody crimes, terrorist acts and genocides have been committed against our people at certain stages of history. More than 23,000 Azerbaijanis have died, 50,000 have been injured or became disabled, and about 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan are still reported as missing as a result of military aggression over the past 30 years.

In 2020, a counter-offensive operation was launched in order to prevent another military aggression against our country and to ensure the security of the civilian population. Azerbaijani territories occupied by Armenia for nearly 30 years were liberated in a short time, and the violated rights of our compatriots were restored.

As a result of the war crimes committed by Armenia against Azerbaijan during these military operations, more than 100 civilians, including more than 10 children were killed, more than 450 people were wounded, 12,000 civilian objects, including more than 3,410 houses, 120 multi- apartment buildings, 512 civilian infrastructure, including apartment buildings and numerous schools, hospitals, and kindergartens, as well as our historic, religious, and cultural monuments were destroyed or severely damaged.

Given that there are sufficient legal grounds to interpret the January 20 tragedy as a crime against humanity and to punish its perpetrators, no legal assessment has been made so far.

We call on the world community and international organizations to cooperate in order to bring the perpetrators of the January 20 events to justice and give an international legal assessment to this bloody act.”

This Statement is addressed to the UN Secretary-General, UN Security Council, UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Office of High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Human Rights Council, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, European Union, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, International and European Ombudsman Institutions, Asian Ombudsman Association, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Ombudsman Association of its member states, Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, International Peace Bureau, foreign ombudsmen and national human rights institutions, embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foreign embassies in Azerbaijan, as well as to the Azerbaijani Diasporas.

Azerbaijani Ombudsperson urges international community to conduct legal assessment of January 20 tragedy (January 19, 2023)

Azerbaijani Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) Sabina Aliyeva has issued a statement on the 33rd anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

AZERTAC presents the statement: “It has been 33 years since the bloody events of January 20, which are the most tragic days in Azerbaijan’s contemporary history, at the same time, one of the brightest and most honorable pages in our people’s heroic history.

The Soviet Army committed horrible and mass destruction against peaceful residents of Baku on the night of January 19-20, 1990.

This bloody event was committed to suppress the voice and prevent the realization of the dreams of independence of the peaceful and civilian Azerbaijanis, protesting the support of the USSR for the Armenian policy of aggression against the historical territories of Azerbaijan, and their pro-Armenian, and biased politics against our country. Although the Soviet Empire perpetrated a violent terror act against peaceful human beings, it was impossible to break the will of the people of Azerbaijan.

As a result of this crime against humanity committed by the former Soviet armed forces in several districts along with the cities of Baku and Sumgayit, 150 peaceful civilians, including children, women, and the elderly were brutally killed, 744 persons were injured, 841 persons were arbitrarily deprived of liberty, and 112 persons of them were sent to different prisons across the USSR.

Although our bloody memory – the tragic events of January 20 were one of the most tragic days we have experienced in the recent past, they were engraved in the memory of our people as a glorious history of heroism.

Despite the pressures and challenges that existed on January 21, 1990, Heydar Aliyev, National Leader of the people of Azerbaijan, together with his family, came to the Office of the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan in Moscow, held a press conference to inform the world community about these crimes against humanity committed on January 20, and made a sharp statement about this crime committed by the USSR leadership.

During the session of the Supreme Assembly of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic on November 20, 1990, Great Leader Heydar Aliyev considered the tragedy of January 20 as an affront to the sovereign rights of the people of Azerbaijan; the bloody events of January 20 were given a political and legal assessment in 1994, following his return to the rule in Azerbaijan, and the names of the perpetrators of this crime were brought to the attention of the general public, and 20 January was declared a national mourning day.

During the bloody events of January 20, the facts of reprisals against innocent people, the deprivation of the right to life and the wounding of hundreds of persons, the presence of women, older persons, and children among the victims, the restriction of the opportunities of people to receive accurate information on the happenings by placing information blockade were serious and mass violations of the principle of respect for human rights and freedoms, which is one of the main principles of international law.

The provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international legal documents were grossly violated as a result of this tragedy.

The criminal acts committed on January 20 were acts of military aggression that seriously and grossly impaired human rights, disrespected the norms of international law, including international humanitarian law, and were directed against the sovereignty and independence of Azerbaijan, furthermore, they were crimes against humanity.

We do believe the bloody events of January 20 that occurred as a result of military aggression against Azerbaijan, will be evaluated within international law as a crime against mankind and humanity, and the perpetrators of this crime will be held accountable, and the criminals will not go unpunished.

We urge international organizations and the world community to conduct a legal assessment of the tragic events of January 20 that resulted in grave breaches of human rights in violation of the universally recognized principles and norms as soon as possible.”

The statement is addressed to the UN Secretary-General, UN Security Council, UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Office of High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Human Rights Council, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, European Union, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, International and European Ombudsman Institutions, Asian Ombudsman Association, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Ombudsman Association of its member states, Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, International Peace Bureau, foreign ombudsmen and national human rights institutions, embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foreign embassies in Azerbaijan, as well as to the Azerbaijani Diasporas.

**Azerbaijani Ombudsperson issues statement on 34th anniversary of January 20 tragedy
(January 19, 2024)**

Azerbaijani Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) Sabina Aliyeva has issued a statement on the 34th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

The statement reads: “34 years have passed since the events of January 20, which left an indelible mark as one of the most tragic and heroic pages in the glorious history of Azerbaijan.

On the night from January 19 to 20, 1990, Soviet forces, which had entered Baku to suppress the peaceful opposition of the resilient population protesting against the overt support of Armenia's aggressive policies backed by the former USSR leadership, committed brutal massacres against the people.

As a result of this act of terror, as one of the gravest crimes against humanity in history, 150 peaceful civilians, including women, children, and the elderly, in Baku and several districts of Azerbaijan have been killed, 744 people were injured, and another 841 were unlawfully detained.

Great Leader Heydar Aliyev, as always, stood by the side of his people during these difficult times, and on January 21, 1990, he held a press conference at the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Moscow with his family to bring the heinous crime committed against humanity to the attention of the world, by making a sharp statement condemning the former Soviet leadership for this military intervention. National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev, upon his second return to power, expressed his political and legal positions on this crime, and 20th January was declared a National Day of Mourning.

As a result of this military aggression, particularly targeting the civilian population, including women, children, and the elderly, the principle of international law to respect human rights and freedoms, the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international legal documents were severely violated.

Despite numerous calls to international organizations and the global community, there has been no legal evaluation of this crime against humanity, and those responsible for this violent act have not been brought to justice.

As the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I call on international organizations to legally condemn this heinous crime committed against the peaceful population and grave violation of human rights, and I urge them to take decisive actions to hold the accused accountable before the court of justice.”

Azerbaijan's Human Rights Commissioner
Issues statement on 35th anniversary of January 20 tragedy
(January 17, 2025)

Azerbaijani Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) Sabina Aliyeva has issued a statement on the 35th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy.

The statement reads: "It has been 35 years since the January 20 tragedy – a bloody event that was mercilessly committed against an unarmed population by the former USSR armed forces on the night of January 19 to 20, 1990, in order to suppress the spirit of national freedom and the desire for independence of the people of Azerbaijan.

In order to break the will of the Azerbaijani people protesting against the biased attitude of the former USSR leadership towards Azerbaijan, the deportation of Azerbaijanis from its historical lands, which is now the territory of present-day Armenia, and unfounded territorial claims of Armenia against Azerbaijan, as a result of this heinous crime against humanity, 150 innocent people, including women, children, and the elderly, in Baku and several other districts and cities of Azerbaijan were murdered, 744 people were injured, and 841 individuals were unlawfully detained.

That day is not only a heroic chronicle of the Azerbaijani people who took to the squares for the sake of freedom but also a historical day when unarmed people, with a desire for freedom, courageously and honorably fought for liberty. Despite the brutal terror act committed against innocent people, the Azerbaijani people succeeded in gaining their independence.

The National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, with his family members, arrived at Azerbaijan's Permanent Mission in Moscow on January 21 despite the pressures and potential threats to his life. He held a press conference, issued a strong statement, and informed the international community that this grave crime had been committed by the leadership of the USSR. It was only after the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev returned to the country's leadership that, in 1994, political and legal assessments were made regarding the January 20 events.

The failure of international organizations and the world community to condemn the commission of this event at that time later paved the way for the occupation of Azerbaijani lands by Armenians and the perpetration of acts of genocide against the Azerbaijani people.

As a result of the crime against humanity perpetuated under the instruction of the former USSR leadership, the provisions of the UN Charter, the universally recognized norms and principles of international law, as well as, the requirements of the international treaties, to which the former Soviet Union was a party, have been seriously infringed and human rights have been grossly violated.

However, with regret, we would like to inform that in spite of numerous appeals to international organizations and the global community, this crime against humanity has yet to be given legal evaluation, and those who committed this heinous crime have not been held accountable.

As the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I urge international organizations and the world community to interpret incidents that occurred on 20 January as a crime against humanity, one of the gravest forms of international crimes and to take just stance to ensure that military personnel who committed these crimes, along with those who ordered the execution of these acts are also held criminally accountable.”