

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Victorious Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev's addresses, speeches and interviews during the Patriotic War
(September 26, 2020 – November 10, 2020)

- **President Ilham Aliyev appealed to people: Appeal of President Ilham Aliyev to the people** (*September 27, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev chaired meeting of Security Council: Speech of President Ilham Aliyev** (*September 27, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev responded to questions in “60 minutes” program of Rossiya-1” TV channel** (*September 29, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva met with wounded servicemen undergoing treatment at Central Military Clinical Hospital of Defense Ministry: Speech of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev** (*September 30, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Al Jazeera TV channel** (*October 02, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Nationwide address of President Ilham Aliyev** (*October 04, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Al ArabiyaTV channel** (*October 05, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by TRT Haber TV channel** (*October 05, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Russian “Perviy Kanal” TV** (*October 06, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by CNN-Türk TV** (*October 07, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Euronews TV** (*October 07, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Nationwide address of President Ilham Aliyev** (*October 09, 2020*)
- **CNN International TV channel’s “Connect the World” program broadcast interview with President Ilham Aliyev** (*October 09, 2020*)
- **Sky News TV channel broadcast interview with President Ilham Aliyev** (*October 10, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Russian RBC TV channel** (*October 10, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish Haber Global TV channel** (*October 12, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish Haber Türk TV channel** (*October 13, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by France 24 TV channel** (*October 15, 2020*)
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish NTV TV channel** (*October 15, 2020*)

- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish A Haber TV channel (October 16, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Nationwide address of President Ilham Aliyev (October 17, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev gave a video interview to Russian TASS news agency (October 19, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Nationwide address of President Ilham Aliyev (October 19, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Japan's Nikkei newspaper (October 21, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev gave interview to French Le Figaro newspaper (October 24, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by U.S. Fox News TV channel (October 25, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Address of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev (October 27, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Italian Rai 1 TV channel (October 27, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Russian Interfax agency (October 30, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by German ARD TV channel (October 31, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Italian La Repubblica newspaper (November 04, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Spanish EFE news agency (November 05, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva visited Alley of Honors and Alley of Martyrs: Address of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Victorious Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev to the nation (November 08, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by BBC News (November 09, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Address of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev (November 10, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva met with servicemen undergoing treatment at Clinical Medical Center No 1: Speech of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev (November 11, 2020)**
- **President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Address of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev (November 20, 2020)**
- **President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Address of President Ilham Aliyev to the nation (November 25, 2020)**
- **President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation: Address of President Ilham Aliyev to the nation (December 01, 2020)**

-
- A Victory parade dedicated to Victory in the Patriotic war was held at Azadlig Square, Baku: Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended the parade: **Speech of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev (December 10, 2020)**

President Ilham Aliyev appealed to people

27.09.2020 [12:45]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has made an appeal to the people of Azerbaijan. AZERTAC presents the President's appeal.

Appeal of President Ilham Aliyev to the people

- Armenian armed forced fired on our settlements, as well as our military positions, from several directions this morning, using various types of weaponry, including heavy artillery.

As a result of the enemy fire, there are casualties among the civilian population and our servicemen. Some people have been wounded. May God rest our martyrs in peace! Their blood will not remain unavenged. The Azerbaijani Army is currently firing on the enemy's military positions, and as a result of these strikes, many units of the enemy's military equipment have been destroyed. This is another manifestation of Armenian fascism.

Armenia's military provocations against Azerbaijan have become regular of late. In July, our servicemen and a civilian were killed as a result of artillery fire in the direction of Tovuz on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. It is no secret that the first fire, including artillery fire, was opened by Armenia, and the first victims were Azerbaijani servicemen. Azerbaijan gave a fitting rebuff to the enemy and they could not move an inch forward. The enemy was stopped and the territorial integrity of our country was protected. As a result of the crushing blows, the Armenian side was forced to accept a bitter defeat. I have said this and I want to say again that if we had wanted, we could have conducted military battles on the territory of Armenia. However, we do not have military targets in Armenia, and this being the case, a ceasefire was introduced a few days later.

What objectives did Armenia pursue by committing this provocation? First of all, Armenia plans to occupy Azerbaijani lands and does not conceal that. Their military-political leadership tried to threaten Azerbaijan with a new occupation, a new policy of occupation for new territories – this is the policy of Armenia's military-political leadership today. Another reason is to distract the population from the very serious social and economic problems in Armenia and portray Azerbaijan as an enemy. Yet another reason is that Armenia is doing everything possible to disrupt the negotiations, and I can say that it has succeeded in doing that. It is as a result of Armenia's hypocritical, unconstructive and false policy that the negotiations have actually stopped and this provocation is aimed at these goals. These are the main goals for them.

In July, Azerbaijan gave a fitting response to the enemy, preserved its territorial integrity and once again showed that anyone speaking to Azerbaijan in the language of threats will regret doing that. Unfortunately, this was not a lesson for them. However, after the July provocation, I said that this bitter defeat by Armenia should be a lesson for them.

In August, Armenia launched yet another military provocation. This time a sabotage group was sent to Azerbaijan. The head of the sabotage group was detained by the Azerbaijani military and is currently giving evidence. His statements clearly show that this sabotage group came to Azerbaijan with a plan to commit acts of terror. Another military provocation against the civilian population and our servicemen was committed by Armenia today and, as I said, they have received their punishment this time again and will continue to receive it.

Armenia's provocations are also reflected in the statements made by the Armenian leadership. A year ago, the Armenian prime minister said in the occupied territories, in Khankandi, that "Karabakh is Armenia, full stop." First of all, it is a lie, Karabakh is Azerbaijan, and I have repeatedly expressed my views on this issue. Karabakh is Azerbaijan, an exclamation mark! Secondly, this provocative statement was in fact a major blow to the negotiations. If the prime minister of Armenia says that "Karabakh is Armenia", then what kind of talks can there be?! At the same time, the Armenian leadership has been repeatedly stating for two years that Azerbaijan should negotiate not with Armenia, but with the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic". This is a big blow to the negotiation process. First of all, Azerbaijan will never negotiate with the puppet junta regime. Secondly, attempts to change the format of talks show once again that Armenia's main goal is to disrupt the talks and maintain the status quo. However, the heads of state of the OSCE

Minsk Group co-chairs have repeatedly stated that the status quo is unacceptable, which means that the occupation must end.

Armenia's provocations against us do not end at that. Recently, the "swearing-in" ceremony of the head of the so-called criminal junta was held in Shusha, an ancient city of our ancient Azerbaijan. Isn't this a provocation? This is an insult to us. They thought that we would put up with this insult. They are deliberately provoking us and they will see the bitter consequences.

Recently, a decision was made by the so-called parliament of the "Nagorno-Karabakh republic" to settle people in the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha. This is another provocation. Recently, the prime minister of Armenia announced that "voluntary" military units would be established, bringing together tens of thousands of people. Why is this necessary? Who will they fight against? This was part of the preparations for today's provocation against Azerbaijan. I have said several times, including from the UN platform recently, that Armenia is preparing for a new war, and Armenia must and will be stopped.

Armenia is pursuing a policy of illegal settlement in the occupied territories. Several Lebanese Armenian families have recently been resettled to Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha, an ancient city in Azerbaijan. This is a war crime. This is completely contrary to the Geneva Convention. Armenia will be held accountable for this crime. This is another provocation against us. Settlement in the occupied territories is a crime, and this policy has been pursued by Armenia for many years. The fact is that the country's population is declining due to the difficult economic, political and social situation in Armenia. Armenia is experiencing a demographic crisis and does not have the human resources to deploy its people in the occupied territories. That is why they hope for Armenians living abroad. This policy is currently underway. At the same time, according to the accurate information we have, Armenia has carried out illegal settlement in some of our occupied territories. The names of our districts and villages are being changed. The historical heritage of Azerbaijanis is being erased. Our historical monuments are being destroyed. Azerbaijani mosques are being destroyed and desecrated. Armenia keeps cows and pigs in our mosques. This is the greatest insult to the entire Muslim world. The graves of our ancestors are being destroyed by tractors. It is fascists, vandals and savages who have done this.

At the same time, the recent military exercises in the occupied territories should be considered another provocation by Armenia. Because these exercises have one purpose: to attack Azerbaijan, to fire on the civilian population and to occupy new lands! All the facts I have mentioned show again that Armenia and its ugly policies are the source of danger in the region.

Azerbaijan has not resorted to any provocation. Azerbaijan simply defends its interests, supports its position and pursues its policy openly. We have repeatedly stated that Nagorno-Karabakh is historical and ancient land of Azerbaijan, and this is true. When the prime minister of Armenia says that "Karabakh is Armenia", it is a lie. When I say that "Karabakh is Azerbaijan", it is true. The whole world recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan. Historical justice is on our side. Because it is our native land, our ancestral land. International law is on our side. All international organizations recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. All countries recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Decisions and resolutions adopted within international organizations explicitly state that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan. Four UN Security Council resolutions call for an immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories. These resolutions have been on paper for almost 30 years. Negotiations within the Minsk Group have been going on for almost 30 years and, as a result, Armenia has paralyzed the negotiations by regularly committing military provocations. Besides the United Nations, all other leading international organizations support our rightful position. The Non-Aligned Movement is the second largest international institution after the United Nations, and it is currently chaired by Azerbaijan. It has adopted a fair resolution on the conflict. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has adopted fair resolutions. The decisions of the OSCE and the resolutions of the European Parliament support our position. Our position is based on international law and justice. We are fighting on our own land. Today, the Azerbaijani Army is dealing crushing blows to the enemy on Azerbaijani soil. Today, the Azerbaijani Army protects the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan on its territory. What are Armenian soldiers doing in our lands?! What is the Armenian army doing in our lands?! It is no secret that 90 percent of the personnel in the "Nagorno-Karabakh army" are Armenian citizens. Armenia is an occupying state, this occupation must and will end.

We are on the right path! Ours is the cause of justice! We will win! Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

President Ilham Aliyev chaired meeting of Security Council

27.09.2020 [15:57]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has chaired a meeting of the Security Council. The head of state made a speech at the meeting, AZERTAC reports.

Speech of President Ilham Aliyev

- As you know, early this morning, Armenian armed forces committed yet another military provocation against Azerbaijan. We have losses as a result of this provocation, both among the civilian population and servicemen. This once again shows that Armenia's policy of aggression against Azerbaijan continues, and this policy shows the fascist essence of Armenia to the whole world.

As soon as I received the information in the morning, I contacted the Minister of Defense and the heads of other relevant agencies, gave relevant instructions, and on the basis of these instructions, the Azerbaijani Army launched a large-scale counter-offensive.

I must say that Armenia's military provocation was pre-planned. They have been preparing for this provocation for a long time, and the intelligence we have shows that Armenia intends to start a new war against us. I have repeatedly talked about this issue in the last week – both in my TV interview and from the UN platform. I said that the aggressive state must be stopped. They are preparing for a new war.

I addressed the people of Azerbaijan today. In my address, I gave detailed information about the reasons for this provocation and the ugly steps Armenia has been taking in recent times. I have shared my views, so I do not want to repeat them. I simply want to reiterate that the military attack on us early this morning was a pre-planned military provocation. Because our positions were fired on from various directions using different weaponry, including heavy artillery. At the same time, our settlements and villages were fired on. As I said, we have losses among the civilian population. This once again shows the ugly face of Armenian fascism. Because such atrocities against the civilian population can only be attributed to fascist states, and this is not the first time – the events in Tovuz and others. The Khojaly genocide was committed by Armenian savages against the civilian population. This time too, Armenia's main target is our settlements. By opening fire, they want to create panic among the Azerbaijani public, among the citizens of Azerbaijan, in the villages and towns along the frontline. This morning, I received information from all frontline regions. I can say with full confidence that the citizens of Azerbaijan are showing courage. Everyone is in their place and are ready to support our army and state at any time, and they are doing that.

The Azerbaijani Army is currently conducting a counter-offensive in response to military provocation. I can say that the operation has been successful. The Presidential Administration and the Ministry of Defense have been instructed to keep the population informed about the events on a regular basis. I can say that as a result of the successful counter-offensive, the enemy's manpower and military equipment were severely damaged. Several occupied Azerbaijani settlements have been liberated. I congratulate all the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion!

I am confident that our successful counter-offensive will end the occupation! It will end injustice! It will end the occupation that has lasted for nearly 30 years! Because the people of Azerbaijan want to live on their lands. Azerbaijani citizen live longing for his homeland. People who were forcibly driven out of their ancestral lands by Armenians, by the Armenian leadership want to return to their native lands even though their homes have already been destroyed by savages. Look at the ruins of Aghdam. Look at the ruins of Fuzuli. Look at the state of our mosques in the occupied territories, the state of our cemeteries. All this was committed by Armenian executioners, and we are absolutely right. Our struggle is a struggle for justice, and the citizens of Azerbaijan fully support the state today. We always feel this support. A citizen of Azerbaijan is with the Azerbaijani Army, and I turn to our compatriots who have not been able to return to their native lands for almost 30 years and say that we will do our best to return you to your native lands.

I warned Armenia. After the events in Tovuz, I warned them several times that they would regret it if they did not give up their ugly deeds. We taught them a lesson in 2016, in 2018, in July of this year. But it did not seem to be a lesson for them. This time we are teaching them another lesson and will continue to do that. Today, the glorious Azerbaijani Army is conducting a counter-offensive with great success, and this operation continues.

I must also say that there is high morale in all our military units and formations. At the same time, the number of volunteers enlisted in our army has reached tens of thousands. This shows the commitment of our people to their state.

The settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is our historical task. I have said this many times and I want to reiterate today that we must resolve this issue in a way that would satisfy the people of Azerbaijan. We must resolve this so that historical justice can be restored. We must do so in order to restore the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

I have said in different countries many times that we do not need an incomplete solution to this issue, to this conflict. We are on our own lands, we have no claims to the lands of other countries. But we will not give our lands to anyone either. We will never allow for the creation of a second so-called Armenian state on Azerbaijani soil. We will never allow that, and today's events are showing that again.

Nagorno-Karabakh is our ancient and historical land. I have repeatedly spoken at various international events on the history and past of Nagorno-Karabakh. I have shared the historical truth with the world community. As a result of our focused and tireless efforts, the world has a broad picture of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict today. But in the first years of the conflict, this was not the case. In the first years of the conflict, Armenians of the world portrayed Azerbaijan as an aggressor. Unfortunately, those who were in the leadership of Azerbaijan at that time could not speak out against this propaganda. Azerbaijan was in such a difficult situation: our lands were being lost but the world thought that Azerbaijan was an aggressor. The cause of the loss of Karabakh lands is the Popular Front Party, the Musavat Party of Azerbaijan. It was during their time that our lands were occupied. As a result of their treacherous and incompetent activities, we lost these lands. I always said that we lost them temporarily and that we must return to these lands. The sale of Shusha took place only as a result of struggle for power at that time. The occupation of Kalbajar and Lachin is the direct responsibility of the Popular Front government of Azerbaijan. It was after this occupation that the next occupation was almost inevitable. Because the occupation of Lachin, Kalbajar and Shusha created a geographical link between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. This being the case, of course, the supply of weapons to those regions, to Nagorno-Karabakh, and then the supply of other material resources became easier.

Today, we are wiping out the incompetent actions of the Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan and the Musavat Party, this stain on Azerbaijan. Today we are restoring our lands. In 2016, part of Aghdara, Fuzuli and Jabrayil districts were liberated from the occupiers. Today, in 2020, I want to emphasize once again that several of our settlements were liberated from the occupiers, several strategic heights came under the control of Azerbaijan. A strong Azerbaijani Army is based on a strong political will.

Army building is always the top priority of my activity. Both the military and the Azerbaijani people know this. I have always said that we will do whatever is necessary for our army. We have created a powerful and strong-willed army. All our armed forces meet modern standards and carry out combat missions with dignity, conscience and courage. Today, our various armed units are involved in the counter-offensive, and the counter-offensive is going well under the leadership of a single team. There is full coordination between all armed forces. I am confident that this counter-offensive will continue to be successful.

By giving this information to the people of Azerbaijan, I want to say once again that we are on the right path. We are defending ourselves. We do not lay claim to anyone else's lands, Azerbaijani armed forces have no targets on anyone else's lands, in the territory of Armenia. But we will defend ourselves on our own land and liberate our occupied lands from occupiers.

Now the floor is given to Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov.

Defense Minister **Zakir Hasanov** said:

- Dear President, Mr. Commander-in-Chief. Let me report that a few minutes to 6, Armenian armed forces shelled the villages of Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Tartar and Aghdam districts. There were casualties and wounded among the population. The frontline of the military units was also fired upon. At the same time, a concentration of the enemy's armed forces from the direction of Aghdam, Fuzuli and Jabrayil was in evidence and it was observed that they were preparing for an attack. First of all, it was reported to you and, taking into account the operational situation, the Azerbaijani Army conducted a counter-offensive. As a result of the counter-offensive, the enemy's frontline was broken. I have now been given additional information that seven villages have been liberated. Is it advisable to mention their names here?

President Ilham Aliyev: Do mention.

Minister Zakir Hasanov: Garakhanbayli, Nuzgar, Yukhari Abdurrahmanli, Boyuk Marjanli, Kand Horadiz and Garvand villages have been liberated. The Azerbaijani Army is conducting a successful counter-offensive in other directions and the enemy is retreating with heavy losses. I want to emphasize that the strikes of the Azerbaijani Army are carried out both on the frontline and deep within the enemy. As you mentioned, the most modern weapons are being used and we do not see much resistance from the enemy. The enemy is fully retreating. Reported by Minister of Defense, Colonel-General Hasanov.

President Ilham Aliyev: Clear! We will hold the rest of the Security Council behind closed doors. I am confident that the citizens of Azerbaijan will understand this decision. Many of the issues to be discussed are military secrets. But I want to say again that the population of Azerbaijan is regularly informed by both the Presidential Administration and the Ministry of Defense. Operational information will be shared with the citizens of Azerbaijan.

I congratulate the people of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani Army on their first successes. Long live the Azerbaijani Army! Long live Azerbaijan!

x x x

Other members of the Security Council took part in the discussion.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev responded to questions in “60 minutes” program of Rossiya-1” TV channel

29.09.2020 [21:37]

On September 29, the Rossiya-1 TV channel broadcast the “60 minutes” program dedicated to the latest events on the Azerbaijani-Armenian line of contact.

AZERTAC reports that, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan responded to questions from the hosts on the program.

The hosts first asked questions of President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

Host: Mr. President, thank you for agreeing to this interview. What is happening at the front right now? Information about the use of aviation is already coming in.

President Ilham Aliyev: The situation at the front is tense. As a result of the Armenian military provocation, which began on the morning of 27 September, Azerbaijani settlements and our combat positions were subjected to massive artillery fire. As a result of this aggression, 11 Azerbaijani civilians, including two children, were killed. There are also casualties among the military. We were forced to give an adequate response to the aggressor and thus protect our people and our land. So fierce battles have been going on for three days now, as a result of which the Azerbaijani Army has liberated a number of settlements from occupation and also seized strategic heights in different directions. Today the situation is such that active hostilities are underway.

Host: Ilham Heydarovich, please clarify to us the role of Turkey. Ankara has officially, through its President and leaders of the Foreign Ministry, announced that it will help you on the battlefield.

President Ilham Aliyev: I believe that Turkey is playing a stabilizing role in the region. Turkey is our brotherly country and our ally. From the very first hour the world community learned that Armenia attacked Azerbaijan, Turkey spoke out unequivocally at the level of the head of state and other leaders in support of Azerbaijan, in support of international law. Armenia has grossly violated international law by occupying the territory of Azerbaijan for about 30 years. So the role of Turkey consists in that, nothing else. Turkey provides us with moral support, and we are grateful to the Turkish leadership, the President and the Turkish people for their solidarity and support. Turkey does not participate in this conflict in any other capacity. All the rumors that Turkey is participating as a party to the conflict being circulated by the Armenian side are of provocative nature. As they say now, this is fake news. There is no evidence of Turkey's involvement in the conflict and neither is that necessary. The Azerbaijani Army is sufficiently prepared to protect its people and territory.

Host: Ilham Heydarovich, so you do not confirm, moreover, you refute the information that Turkish Air Force shot down a plane of the Armenian Air Force literally an hour ago. It was about the F-16 and Su-25.

President Ilham Aliyev: We do not have this information. Just recently, I was informed that such news appeared in the information space. It is not confirmed by anything. The F-16 aircraft of the Turkish Air Force do not participate in hostilities in any way. You know, taking into account modern technologies, it is very difficult to conceal anything today, because there are objective forms of observation. There are satellite observations, and therefore it is very easy to verify that this is another provocation. We understand the goal of the Armenian side – by creating such false news, they first want to belittle the combat capability of the Azerbaijani Army, which is now fulfilling the task of restoring its territorial integrity with dignity, and also to create the impression that the conflict is growing, that third countries are joining it. They are trying to attract as many countries as possible in order to justify their provocation. Therefore, I declare to you with full responsibility: Turkey is not a party to the conflict, does not participate in it in any way, and there is no need for this.

Host: Ilham Heydarovich, is your country ready to move towards the Kazan formula, within the framework of which Armenia must liberate several districts, or any other formula? What can be done in principle now? How can the situation be reversed if the conflict in Karabakh and Karabakh proper has been burning or at least smoldering for as many as 30 years? What to do?

President Ilham Aliyev: You know, Azerbaijan has always shown constructiveness on the negotiation track. And the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, who are responsible for the mediation mission, can confirm this. In particular, over the past two years, we have repeatedly stated, both myself and other officials, that we are committed to the principles of settlement that have been developed over the years and

which the Minsk Group and its co-chairs consider the basis for the negotiating process. Moreover, we have stated repeatedly in the past two years and before that we are committed to the format of the negotiations. Negotiations are underway between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There are only two sides to the conflict. Sometimes, when talking about the conflict, there is a mention of all sides. This is an incorrect definition. Not all sides. There are only two sides – Armenia and Azerbaijan. But what has been happening in recent years, after the Soros coup which was carried out by the current government in Armenia? The Armenian prime minister publicly declares that Karabakh is Armenia, full stop. In this case, what kind of negotiations can we talk about? After all, the essence of the principles developed by the OSCE Minsk Group is that the territories around the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region should be transferred to Azerbaijan. And if he says that Karabakh is Armenia and, in addition, that we have to negotiate with the so-called puppet regime of Nagorno-Karabakh, thereby trying to undermine the format of negotiations that has already existed for 20 years, it means that Armenia deliberately disrupts the negotiations and puts forward unacceptable demands. When the Minsk Group recently began to speak more actively about who is still an obstacle to the settlement, they resorted to provocations like the one on 27 September. Before that, on 12 July, our positions at the state border were attacked. After that, on 23 August, when an Armenian sabotage group was captured, its leader was captured on the line of contact. Everything is being done to disrupt the negotiations, then accuse Azerbaijan, then involve third parties and thereby disrupt the negotiations. Because the Armenian side wants to maintain the status quo. The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group represented by the presidents of Russia, France and the United States have repeatedly made statements that the status quo is unacceptable. And this means that the territories under occupation must be returned to Azerbaijan. We are committed to negotiations, but we see completely opposite actions from the Armenian side.

Host: Please tell us, Mr. President, what happened on Sunday, what provoked such a large-scale and bloody confrontation?

President Ilham Aliyev: You know, Armenia had been moving towards this Sunday, towards what happened on Sunday for several months. If you trace the chronology of their actions and statements, you will clearly see that they deliberately went for this provocation. Not so long ago, speaking at the UN General Assembly, I openly said that Armenia was preparing for war and it must be stopped. In July, they launched an armed attack on our settlements at the state border. This is far from the conflict zone. One civilian and several servicemen were killed then. The clashes lasted four days, and since we did not have and do not have any military targets on the territory of Armenia, as soon as the Armenian armed forces were driven back from our territory, the fire was ceased by mutual agreement. Then, as I said, a sabotage group infiltrated our territory and was neutralized. Then the Armenian side publicly and defiantly announced the resettlement of Armenians from Lebanon to the occupied territories and to our ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha, which is a war crime. This is a violation of the Geneva Convention. This is done demonstratively. Prior to that, they held the so-called swearing-in ceremony for the so-called leader of the criminal Nagorno-Karabakh regime in Shusha, an ancient pearl of Azerbaijani culture. All these are deliberate provocations against us, attempts to drag us into conflict and provoke retaliatory actions. We showed restraint, constructiveness and common sense, but when they failed, they made this attempt. Moreover, another reason is the internal political crisis that exists in Armenia. After all, there is a Soros regime in Armenia today. The coup that failed in Belarus was successful in Yerevan two years ago. Today the Armenian leader in the person of Pashinyan is Soros' henchman, a man who made a lot of promises and who cannot fulfill them, and the country is in crisis.

So he needed an external factor, some kind of a mess, so to speak, in order to divert the attention of the population, which he succeeded in doing. Moreover, literally two days before they attacked us, the leader of the main opposition party in Armenia was arrested again. So, the dictatorial and despotic regime of Pashinyan eliminated the entire opposition in his country and is now demonstrating aggression against the Azerbaijani people again.

Host: Your position is clear. Many thanks! Can you please say quite briefly: yes or no. Are there fighters from Syria on the front right now?

President Ilham Aliyev: No! This is more fake news. There are no fighters from Syria. There is no evidence, no proof. This has been introduced by Armenian propaganda and circulates through different websites and different media. There is no need for this. Azerbaijan has a trained army and a very large mobilization reserve. Just yesterday, I announced partial mobilization, we are calling tens of thousands of

reservists under arms, and with a population of 10 million versus 2 million in Armenia we have no need for human resources. Therefore, we are able to stand up for ourselves and punish the aggressor so that he doesn't venture even to look in our direction.

Host: Thank you very much! Ilham Aliyev was on the line with us from Baku. Peace to you. Good bye!

President Ilham Aliyev: Thank you! Good bye!

Host: Now we are being joined by Yerevan. The Armenian leader, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is on the line. Nikol Vovayevich, hello. First of all, we would like to ask you to comment on what is happening right now. There is some very disturbing news coming in.

Nikol Pashinyan: This morning the news is that Azerbaijan bombed villages directly on the territory of the Republic of Armenia. And before that, on 27 September, the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan launched a full-scale military aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh. For three days, they have been bombing the settlements of Nagorno-Karabakh using artillery and multiple launch rocket systems. Unfortunately, we have casualties not only among the military, but also among the civilian population. A very important nuance is that Turkey is actually involved in this process. According to our reliable information, military instructors and high-ranking military personnel are now in the command posts of Azerbaijan and in some places they even direct military operations. Another very important nuance – there have already been many publications in international media outlets that Turkey is recruiting mercenaries in Syria and transporting them to Azerbaijan to participate in the war against Nagorno-Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia. By the way, there is information that right in Azerbaijani settlements there were some clashes between these mercenaries and local residents, because these mercenaries are trying to impose Sharia law in these villages. They go into shops and demand that these shops stop selling alcoholic products, etc.

Host: Mr. Pashinyan, the news has just come in that a Turkish F-16 shot down a Su-25 of the Armenian Air Force. Moreover, the news came in with reference to the Armenian Ministry of Defense. The pilot died. Are you aware of this? What can this mean if planes of Armenia and Turkey are already colliding in the sky?

Nikol Pashinyan: This is a fact that has already taken place and is yet another proof of what I was talking about. You know, it is obvious that both Armenia and the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are under the direct threat of Turkey now. Turkey, according to our information, is looking for a reason for wider involvement in this conflict. According to our information, they are looking for an excuse to bring their troops to Nakhchivan. It is an Azerbaijani enclave bordering Turkey, Armenia and Iran. Although we have information here that some units of the Turkish army are already present there. In general, this is no secret. Turkish troops have already been in Azerbaijan since August. They began joint military exercises, and this war began as a continuation of these military exercises.

Host: Nikolay Vovayevich, many experts these days are formulating and explaining everything that is now happening in Nagorno-Karabakh quite rigidly. The word war is floating around. To what extent is it correct and appropriate to use this word and is it possible to do at least something in order to stop the bloodshed and stop the fire?

Nikol Pashinyan: Well, of course, this is the correct wording. Because there is a war going on. There is a lot of destruction, casualties and a huge number of military personnel involved, and this is a very important nuance for us. As you know, at the beginning of the 20th century, the first genocide of the 20th century took place. This happened in the Ottoman Empire, and the Armenian people fell victim to that genocide. Therefore, we all perceive this as an existential threat to our people. In fact, we perceive it as a war that was declared to the Armenian people. Our people are now simply forced to exercise their right to self-defense. What can we do? The international community must resolutely condemn the aggressive actions and aggression of Azerbaijan, condemn the actions of Turkey, demand that Turkey withdraw from this region altogether, because Turkey's military presence in the South Caucasus does not promise anything good. This can lead to further escalation and an increase in the scale of this military action, this war. The international community must take specific steps to force Turkey to withdraw from the South Caucasus and force Azerbaijan to stop aggression and aggressive actions, military operations.

Host: Prime Minister, we will not detain you any longer. We know that you need to run to a meeting with the military. A very short question: what negotiation formats can work now? Or have all the previous agreements already been thrown into the past – relatively speaking, the Kazan

format, according to which you must liberate several districts? Have all these agreements been erased or is it still possible to move along them?

Nikol Pashinian: You know, as far as the format of negotiations is concerned, we believe that the negotiations should continue where they were started – with the co-chairmanship of the OSCE Minsk Group. As for specific negotiations, negotiations need to have an appropriate atmosphere. It is very difficult to talk about negotiations, especially about their content, when military action is taking place. First of all, violence must be stopped, and it must be stated. Azerbaijan must accept the formula that there is no military solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. After all, this war did not start from scratch. For a long time, the Azerbaijani government has been developing a rhetoric of hatred against Armenians and has been threatening for a long time, contrary to international appeals, that it is going to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh issue by military means. I hope that at least these events and the situation we now have will convince Azerbaijan that there is no military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Because the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan have failed to fulfill their task. I think the military-political leadership could not achieve any success in the military sense at the front. That is, they could not resolve their problem. I hope this will convince Azerbaijan that there is no military solution to this conflict. There is only a peaceful and negotiated solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and any solution must be acceptable not only to Azerbaijan, but also to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. After all, I want to state that when I became prime minister, I proposed and continued to offer a specific formula for resolving this conflict that any solution should be acceptable to Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. The names of the countries doesn't matter. I mean that this solution should be equally acceptable. Unfortunately, the government of Azerbaijan, the President of Azerbaijan want to reach a solution that will be acceptable only to Azerbaijan. That is impossible. A compromise is needed, and an atmosphere is needed for a compromise, and to do that Azerbaijan must immediately stop its aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia because Azerbaijan started it. By the way, and it was a pre-planned operation, and there is no doubt that this operation was planned during the military exercises in conjunction with the Turkish armed forces. Thank you.

Host: Thank you very much! Let's proceed from the fact that the option should be really acceptable both for Armenia and, of course, for Azerbaijan. There is no military solution to this conflict. Only politics and the diplomatic path. Thank you!

X X X

Political and military experts then joined the discussions.

Igor Korotchenko, Editor-in-Chief of the “Natsionalnaya oborona” magazine:

- I listened to the speeches of the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia very attentively. Undoubtedly, it was an absolutely clear, logical, precise and consistent speech by Ilham Aliyev. This is the MGIMO school. MGIMO trains great personnel! Now to the essence of what has been said. President Ilham Aliyev is right when he said absolutely correctly that with the current level of development of intelligence technologies – satellite, electronic, undercover – it is impossible to conceal the fact that if Turkish fighters were really deployed to the territory of Azerbaijan, this would be exposed quite easily by any country that has satellite intelligence... Today the Nagorno-Karabakh region is closely monitored by all the leading countries of the world. I would like to draw the attention of my colleagues to the following. We are all adherents of international law. From the point of view of the norms of international law, military action today is taking place on the territory of Azerbaijan, between the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan and Armenian military formations.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva met with wounded servicemen undergoing treatment at Central Military Clinical Hospital of Defense Ministry

30.09.2020 [13:55]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva have met with the servicemen wounded during the Armenian military provocation that launched on September 27 and treated at the Central Military Clinical Hospital of the Defense Ministry.

Minister of Defense Colonel General Zakir Hasanov reported to President, Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev.

The head of state made a speech at the meeting.

Speech of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev

- May Allah grant you healing. Dear guys, you received various injuries, you were wounded in the battles for the Motherland. The doctors are taking good care of you. I am sure that the doctors will do their best for you to recover as soon as possible and return to normal life.

According to the information provided to me, all our wounded soldiers and officers live with the desire to recover soon and go back to the zone of military action, to continue the just war for the Motherland. Ours is the cause of justice, we are fighting on our own lands, we are fighting for the Motherland. We are fighting for a fair cause, and I am sure that in this conflict we will achieve what we want. Justice will be done and Azerbaijan will restore its territorial integrity. Our compatriots who have been living as IDPs for many years will also return to their native lands.

As you know, special attention is being paid to the families of martyrs in our country, and all necessary work is being done by the state. I can say that Azerbaijan can be considered an exemplary country in the world for the attention being paid to the families of martyrs. You know that on my instructions, all the families of martyrs are provided with apartments and houses by the state. This year alone, 1,500 families of martyrs will be provided with housing by the state. In the next two to three years, the families of our heroic sons who died in the first Karabakh war will be fully provided with houses and apartments. We still have martyrs today. We have had martyrs in the battles for the Motherland. May Allah rest their souls in peace, may Allah give patience to their families and relatives. Their blood does not and will not remain unavenged. The enemy is receiving a fitting rebuff.

At the same time, the state provides the necessary support to the veterans of Karabakh. Their day-to-day problems are being solved. You can also be sure that the state will be by your side, the doctors are doing and will do everything possible for you to recover here as soon as possible and return to normal life.

Azerbaijan is fighting on its own lands and you have been wounded on the path to justice. Our soldiers are saviors, while Armenian soldiers are occupiers. That is the difference. We are fighting on our own lands, while an Armenian soldier dies on the land of another state – Azerbaijan. I want to address the Armenian people and urge them not to become hostages of the ugly deeds of their leadership. Let them hold their government accountable today. They should not send their children to Azerbaijan. What is the Armenian soldier doing in Azerbaijan? We are fighting on our own lands. Our soldiers and officers are dying on their own lands, are getting wounded on their own lands, and we are liberating our own lands. During the fighting that has been ongoing for four days now, the Azerbaijani Army successfully conducted an operation and liberated strategic heights and several settlements. We are returning to these lands after a long break. We have hoisted our flag on these lands and no-one can take us out of these lands. We must restore our territorial integrity. This is why the Armenian people must understand this, the head of state said: "The Armenian people must understand that it is a crime to occupy the land of another state for 30 years, destroy all buildings and historical sites, expel more than 1 million people from their homeland and commit genocide against the Azerbaijani people. We are restoring historical justice, historical justice! Karabakh is our native, ancient and historical land. Suffice it to look at the history of the Karabakh khanate to see that the people of Azerbaijan have lived, built and created on these lands for centuries. Our sacred city of Shusha was built by the Azerbaijanis. The lands under occupation today are our historical lands. Our

cause is the cause of justice. We want to restore our territorial integrity, we have the right to do so, we are doing it and we will do it.

If the Armenian people want to live in peace, they should hold their government accountable. Because the misfortune of the Armenian people lies in the fact that for many years they were governed by a bandit criminal regime, the regime that committed genocide against the Azerbaijanis only in its own personal interests and keeps our lands under occupation. I am sure that the Armenian people will understand my words correctly. We have nothing against the Armenian people. Azerbaijan is a multinational state, many nations live here in peace and tranquility, including the Armenian people. Thousands of Armenians live on the territory of Azerbaijan. No-one says anything to them, they are our citizens. Therefore, our struggle is a struggle for a just cause. We are right from the point of view of history, from the point of view of international law, from the point of view of justice. Azerbaijani soldiers and officers are fighting for their native land. Fierce battles are under way in Fizuli, Jabrayil and other occupied territories today, we are suffering losses, our veterans and servicemen are getting wounded. But this fight is a fight for a just cause. Therefore, I want to say again that our cause is just, historical truth, international law and justice are on our side by 100 percent.

On 27 September, the Armenian armed forces committed another military provocation against us. I warned them. I spoke to them from the UN rostrum. I told the entire international community that Armenia is preparing for a new war and that Armenia must be stopped. Unfortunately, the international community and the parties involved in this issue were unable to influence the Armenian government at the required level. If they cannot stop the occupier, then the Azerbaijani soldier will stop them. The Azerbaijani soldier will remove them from our lands and restore justice. I said that if the military provocations committed against us in July and August are repeated, then Armenia will regret it, and I stand my ground. The advantage gained on the battlefield, our liberated settlements and strategic heights once again show that Azerbaijani soldiers, Azerbaijani officers are fulfilling their civic duty with dignity.

Armenia must end its policy of occupation. Instead, the prime minister of Armenia puts forward conditions. He put forward seven conditions to us. I said some time ago that we reject these conditions. We have one condition – they must leave our lands unconditionally, completely and immediately. This condition is still in force, and if the Armenian government fulfills it, the fighting will stop, blood will not be shed, there will be peace. Peace will come to our region. We want peace, we want a solution to the issue. Otherwise, we would not have cherished hopes for negotiations for 30 years. The only reason we remained committed to the negotiation was that there was hope. We were encouraged, they sent us signals that we should bear with them a little and the issue would be resolved. But I said that the Azerbaijani people will never accept this occupation. I said that if the issue is not resolved through negotiations, then Azerbaijan has every right to resolve this issue by military means. The Azerbaijani people gave us this right, the norms of international law gave us this right. The charter of the highest international body of the world, the United Nations, states that every state has the right to self-defense, and we are exercising it to defend ourselves. Having launched a counteroffensive, we are inflicting crushing blows on the enemy.

It is not too late. I want to say again: Armenia must vacate our lands immediately. You know that the leaders of various international organizations and different countries are calling me, enquire about this issue, express their views. My word is the same – both internationally and domestically. We are on the right path, the battles are going on in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan is restoring its territorial integrity, and we have every right to do so. Because no country in the world recognizes the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh republic. This is our historical land. From the point of view of international law as well, this is our land.

I am confident that Azerbaijan will restore its territorial integrity. There is high morale in the army. You know that too. There is high morale in society. I have been receiving many letters every day for the last three to four days, both from citizens of the country and from other countries. Most letters from abroad come from brotherly Turkey. In those letters, our Turkish brothers express their desire to fight with us for this just cause. I express my appreciation to them. But I want to say again that there is no need for that. The Azerbaijani Army is quite strong and well-equipped. We must resolve this issue so that historical justice is restored. At the same time, on behalf of all of us and all the people of Azerbaijan, I express my deep gratitude to brotherly Turkey, its President, my brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for his resolute and brotherly position. Because my dear brother's very open and harsh statements show again that Azerbaijan is not alone. Turkey is with Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan is always with Turkey!

I have already said this but I want to say again that these bloody battles are the moment of truth for us, for the entire Azerbaijani people. We see who is who. We see that sometimes those who say nice words and make good statements do not keep their word. One thing is said and a different is done. But Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan have unequivocally supported Azerbaijan. You know, there is an international format for negotiations. Unfortunately, this format has not achieved any results. Therefore, in the current situation, calls for dialogue from any side are not relevant. This is done by international organizations, the UN is doing it. We naturally accept that. The OSCE is doing this and we accept it because the OSCE has the mandate. But when someone says to us, 'let's start such a dialogue, we will also help', there is no need for that. Now is the moment of truth. Which side are you on? Truth or lie? On the side of a friend or an enemy? This is the moment of truth for me, for our people, for all of us.

Of course, we will never forget the countries, organizations and people who support us these days. You know that Azerbaijan has strong positions in the world. In recent years, we have carried out quite effective activities in international organizations and have been able to prove our case. We had to prove our case. We can already say that all major international organizations support our position. The UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement, the European Parliament, the OSCE – all these organizations have issued statements in support of our position. We are grateful for that. This is the legal side of the issue. As for the historical side, the historical truth is on our side. Anyone can go online and read. There are materials related to the history of the Karabakh Khanate. There is information about the inclusion of the Karabakh Khanate into the Russian Empire. There is information about the Kurekchay peace treaty. On the one hand, the Kurekchay peace treaty was signed by Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Shusha and Karabakh. This is the way he is referred to in the agreement – Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Shusha and Karabakh. On the other hand, it was signed by a general of Tsarist Russia. There is not a word about the Armenian people in the Kurekchay peace treaty. What does this mean? This means that there was no Armenian population there at that time, they were resettled there after that. When they were settled there, they put forward territorial claims against us. Therefore, we are absolutely right. Our fight is a fight for justice. We will not deviate from our principled position. I have repeatedly spoken about this from all international platforms and I say today that we are on the path of justice. We must restore our territorial integrity and we will restore it.

The information I receive shows that the events of the last three to four days do not become a lesson for the Armenian leadership. They are preparing new provocations, they want to bombard our settlements again and continue to do this. Our civilian casualties are growing every day. According to information as of yesterday morning, 10 of our civilians were killed. According to information provided to me this morning, the number of civilians killed has reached 13. What does this mean? This demonstrates the ugly face of Armenian fascism. We have never fought against civilians. As soon as the counter-offensive operation began, I instructed all our commanders and the Ministry of Defense that no action should be taken against the civilian population. Our goal is the positions, equipment and manpower of Armenia's armed formations. But they bombard our villages and cities, 13 civilians were killed, more than 40 civilians were wounded, 168 houses were destroyed. This is the face of Armenian fascism. They cannot resist us on the battlefield, therefore they strike at our villages and towns. But all our compatriots living there are there and everyone says 'Long live the Motherland'. They have not retreated a centimeter and, I am sure, will not do that. They are confident that the Azerbaijani army will protect them. They are looking forward to the moment when the Azerbaijani flag is raised in the occupied territories and the occupation ends.

I want to congratulate you. At a young age, you showed true heroism and courage, fought for your Motherland with dignity and inscribed your names in the history of Azerbaijan. At the same time, it is very difficult for me, for all of us to see you in this state. But you can rest assured that we will do everything necessary for your health. Everyone who is undergoing treatment in all our hospitals, in our military hospitals now deserves special care, and all our doctors, in fact, not only doctors, but also our entire people should support you. You can be sure that the state will be by your side. We dream of one thing – for you to get well as soon as possible, return to normal life and continue your glorious mission. You should be an example for the young people. The people of Azerbaijan are a heroic people, because they raised sons like you.

I want to take this opportunity to pay a tribute of respect to your parents and the parents of our other wounded and martyred servicemen. I want to thank them on my own behalf and on behalf of all the people

of Azerbaijan. They have raised heroic children. I am sure that both them and all the people of Azerbaijan are proud of you. We will win, Karabakh is ours, Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

Major Etibar Jamalov: Mr. Commander-in-Chief, Mr. President, thank you very much! Indeed, the Azerbaijani soldier stopped the enemy and gave them a fitting rebuff. Today, everyone is ready to return to the front line. We are proud of your great words. We are always ready to burn like a candle for our land, for our state. Many thanks to the medical staff, they are looking after us very well. We are ready to return to the front line with all our fighting friends in the near future. Thank you very much!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Al Jazeera TV channel

02.10.2020 [16:06]

As reported earlier, on October 2, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Al Jazeera TV channel. AZERTAC presents the interview.

Correspondent: President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, thank you for talking to Al Jazeera.

President Ilham Aliyev: Very glad to see you.

Correspondent: It has been two decades since the present conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has begun and you have been through lots of ups and downs but no peace has been succeeded so far. Why has this conflict been dragging for so long?

President Ilham Aliyev: The main reason is that Armenia doesn't want peace. They want to keep our lands under occupation forever. They don't want to change the status quo and this is a reason why it lasted so long. Because otherwise, if Armenia demonstrated a good will and acted in compliance with the resolutions of main international organizations the conflict would have been resolved many years ago. Because back in 1993, when Armenia occupied part of our territories, the UN Security Council adopted four resolutions demanding immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of their troops from our territories. But these resolutions remain on paper. Minsk Group which was created in order to facilitate, to find the solution, already is in activity for 28 years, and also without any results. Therefore, the main reason is they said the position of Armenia, the second reason is that lack of insistence from the side of the mediators and lack of pressure on Armenia to start demanding resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. On many occasions, I raised this issue and was saying that international sanctions must be imposed on Armenia to force them to comply with resolutions and to start liberation of our territories but my appeals were not answered properly, and now what is happening is a result of Armenia's destructive policy.

Correspondent: So, you say Azerbaijan doesn't have the international support that it deserves based on the international legal concerns?

President Ilham Aliyev: From point of view of international law norms and decisions and resolutions of international organizations, we have very broad support. As I already mentioned the UN Security Council resolutions which are resolutions of the highest international body adopted resolutions asking Armenia or demanding Armenia to withdraw their troops. The General Assembly of United Nations did the same. Other international organizations, like Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Non-Aligned Movement, European Parliament and others did the same but it is not enough. So we have a legal framework for the resolution. But there is not enough practical pressure on aggressor and here we see the contradiction between international law, and what is happening in reality. So, such an open ignorance of the norms and principles of international law by Armenia, should be a good indicator that international law doesn't work, or it works selectively. In some cases, as you know, Security Council resolutions are being implemented within days, if not hours, but in our case it is on paper for so many years. So, lack of practical pressure on aggressor is also one of the reasons the conflict lasts so long.

Correspondent: You have accused Armenia of starting the war, this conflict actually. Many can argue that Armenia having the territory it has and victory of the velvet revolution in 2018, wouldn't risk starting an armed conflict. What would you say?

President Ilham Aliyev: Well, I don't know, what are the reasons for such kind of analysis but what we see here, we see what is happening on the ground. If we look at what Armenia did after the so-called "revolution", during the last two years, and what they declare, we will see that they were almost provoking us, and they were aiming at starting a new war and the reason is to disrupt negotiations completely. They made several military provocations against Azerbaijan. On 12 July, they attacked our villages and our military positions far away from the region of the conflict in the area of Tovuz, in the western part of Azerbaijan on Armenian-Azerbaijani border. And it was absolutely difficult to understand why they did it. They attacked us with the heavy artillery. The first victims among military servicemen were Azerbaijanis, four our military servicemen were killed immediately, and one 76 year old villager. So, we had to respond. After we responded and they suffered bitter defeat, they withdrew and started to plea for a ceasefire and then I said that we do not have any military objectives on the territory of Armenia. Therefore, as soon as we pushed them back and they already realized that it didn't work, the clashes stopped. It lasted only four days. Then, on August 23, the sabotage group which was sent by Armenian army to penetrate our territory,

and to commit acts of terror was dispersed as the head of the sabotage group was detained. And he is now under investigation. He gives evidence that he was sent in order to commit terror acts against our civilians and military servicemen. It was not us who did it, it was them. And then what happened on 27 September is a logical continuation of this policy. Apart from that, if you look at what they have declared, what they have stated, it's also absolutely clear that they were provoking us. Armenian prime minister a year ago made a statement that Karabakh is Armenia and this statement makes negotiations absolutely senseless. Because one of the main item on the negotiation table is the return of the occupied territories to Azerbaijan. And if he says Karabakh is Armenia and in his understanding Karabakh is not only former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous district but also all the occupied territories, that means that they don't want to return these territories back, that means end of negotiations.

Correspondent: So why would Armenia risk a provocation?

President Ilham Aliyev: First, I think they wanted to destroy completely negotiation process. Then they wanted to put a blame on us, as they do it, and say that look, with Azerbaijan it is not possible to have negotiations. And I think one of the reasons could be the internal difficulties. Because we know what is happening now in Armenia, they suffer very serious political crisis. The leader of main opposition party was arrested two days before they launched an attack. Two former presidents are under criminal investigation, and actually dictatorial regime have been established in Armenia. All the promises which their prime minister was giving after revolution just are on paper, nothing was implemented. They have one of the worst in the world per capita situation with pandemic, so to distract attention and he managed to. And now what he is trying to do, to consolidate society in front of the so-called ‘Azerbaijani aggression’ and to strengthen his personal rule. So, everything is very logical from their point of view, but they did a very big mistake, and moreover, before the aggression, several days before, I was speaking at UN General Assembly, saying that they are preparing for war and they must be stopped. And that's what happened.

Correspondent: You said before that the Armenian military must unconditionally withdraw from the territories that they have occupied. What do you aim for in the region as Azerbaijan?

President Ilham Aliyev: We?

Correspondent: Yes.

President Ilham Aliyev: We still keep our position unchanged. What I am demanding is absolutely in line with international law, because the whole world recognizes territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and no country in the world recognizes the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic”. What I am saying is completely almost the wording of the UN Security Council resolutions. And they need to leave our territory and then the war will stop and then the conflict will come to an end. And then, maybe some time later people of Azerbaijan and Armenia can again live together, in peace. So, that's our position, and it is unchanged, and it is based on historical truth, it is based on international law and also it is based on today's political and geo-political realities in our region. I think Armenian government overestimated their so-called importance on global arena, overestimated the possible international support to them and made very serious mistakes provoking us, attacking us and now they are suffering a very serious defeat.

Correspondent: Would you accept going to the negotiation table with Armenia's prime minister Nikol Pashinyan?

President Ilham Aliyev: Actually negotiations stopped, because after his statement that ‘Karabakh is Armenia’, I said there is no rule for negotiations but our Minsk Group co-chairs were making requests to me that Azerbaijan show maybe more understanding with respect to the fact that Armenian government is new, and maybe they do not completely control their emotions and their words. And I said okay, let's try. We want to find a peaceful solution therefore, we waited for so many years and probably negotiations would have been continued if not for this distractive approach. And after that statement I had a meeting with Armenian prime minister but they were absolutely meaningless. They were formal. He was telling me that they are not going to give territories back. And then, what to talk about? If they don't want to do that, if they go against elaborated principles by the Minsk Group, which they elaborated for years and means that he destroys negotiations. Negotiations cannot be held unilaterally. We need to have a partner but in Armenia so far we don't have a partner for negotiations.

Correspondent: So, can we say that Azerbaijan's preconditioning for coming to a negotiating table is that Armenia withdraws from the occupied territories?

President Ilham Aliyev: Actually, it was Armenian prime minister who put precondition to us. And that, by the way is another provocation. I think several months ago he put seven preconditions to Azerbaijan.

Actually, he wanted to dictate his agenda to us and to the Minsk Group. And one of those preconditions was that Azerbaijan should negotiate with the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh authorities”. And not only we but also Minsk Group rejected it. Because it changes completely the format of negotiations, which was elaborated for more than twenty years. And negotiations are taking place between Armenia and Azerbaijan. So, he put precondition to us and we rejected it. And the reason why he did it, was again he wanted negotiations to stop and keep the status quo unchanged. As far as we are concerned, we are always ready for negotiations. We never rejected it, we had difficult times in negotiation process in previous years. Not everything was going smoothly. But, with the previous Armenian leaders we had a process. We were elaborating step by step approach. Otherwise, we wouldn't have been in this process for so many years. It was not useless time. I think we have made very big progress. I am in this process since 2003, and I worked with two previous Armenian presidents and we made progress. It was not easy, we had, of course, a big variety of use but we were making step by step progress and we elaborated what we have now. After Pashinyan came to power, he not only destroyed everything before him but wanted to pretend that Armenia before him did not exist and he is now the creator of new Armenia and he destroyed all the elaborated principles. Therefore, full responsibility is on him and his government. By the way, reasonable people in Armenia understand it. They were already making statements alarming Armenian population that this person leads their country to catastrophe. It is not a way how to behave on negotiations, it is not a way how to provoke Azerbaijan. Another provocation was the so-called inauguration of the so-called leader of “Nagorno-Karabakh” in the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha. No other so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh leader” did that. Why he did it. In order to insult the feelings of Azerbaijanis. Then, they decided to move the so-called parliament of “Nagorno-Karabakh” from Khankandi to Shusha. Why? Another insult on Azerbaijanis. They openly resettle Armenians from Lebanon to the occupied territories, demonstrate it on TV which is a brutal violation of Geneva Convention, in order to demonstrate their hatred to us. Everything what he did was to destroy negotiation process. Therefore, now when they are pleading for negotiations, when Pashinyan calls world leaders many times and is complaining about Azerbaijan, I think those leaders should tell him ‘it was you who destroyed negotiations. it was you who provoked Azerbaijan, it was you who insulted the feelings of Azerbaijanis’. Therefore, you must be responsible for that. And Armenian people and I made an appeal a couple of days ago to Armenian people. They should make him responsible for that. We don't have a problem with Armenian people, they are our citizens, we have thousands Armenians living in Azerbaijan, and those who live in Nagorno-Karabakh area, we also consider them our citizens. And we invite them to live together with us as many other nationalities and ethnicities who live in Azerbaijan. Therefore, Armenia should refrain completely from these provocative statements. They should make new statements that Karabakh is not Armenia, and then we will see.

Correspondent: So, within this deadlock, political deadlock, would a Russian mediation work for Azerbaijan?

President Ilham Aliyev: Russia is one of the countries which is a mediator along with United States and France, and during my involvement in this process for 17 years all 3 countries were equally involved in the process. And there was and there is quite a high level of coordination in the process. Of course, Russia has a special position, because it is a neighbor to Azerbaijan, neighbor to the region. It does not have a state border with Armenia, but nevertheless, Russia is a country which Azerbaijan and Armenia have good relations and historical relations. Therefore, of course, their role, their, I would say, capability to mediate are much higher due to objective reasons from those who are situated far away from the region and maybe not completely know what was happening here during the last decades. Therefore, we think that three countries should continue to work together if all of them keep neutrality. This is important. And we are concerned that just recent days we see some statements which are counter-productive and which are demonstrating a kind of change in the position in neutrality. Every country can have its position, it is normal. But if you are a mediator in such a sensitive issue, you should act in this capacity. If you want to act in your national capacity, of course, but then you should step down from the Minsk Group co-chairmanship and say whatever you want, accuse whomever you want, deliver stories about what happened which has no proof and, of course, nobody would object. But if you are a mediator you have to be neutral. You have to be a mediator, otherwise mediation will not be acceptable by us.

Correspondent: So, there are calls from the international community for a ceasefire. But given the latest statements by both Azerbaijani and Armenian side are you choosing to ignore international calls for a ceasefire?

President Ilham Aliyev: No, we are not ignoring. But ceasefire cannot be achieved unilaterally. I am just trying to deliver the message to those leaders who called me during these days saying that it was not Azerbaijan who started it. We had to defend ourselves. If we did not respond this time the way we did, today we would have had hundreds of victims among civilians. We still have a lot. This morning I received information we have 19 victims among civilians, two of them are children. We have 54 wounded people among civilians. And we have more than 300 houses damaged or completely demolished by Armenian artillery. And they attack our villages, they attack our people, they were to kill as many Azerbaijanis as they can. They started yesterday to use long distance missiles from the territory of Armenia. Thus, they make this weapons which they use a legitimate target for Azerbaijan. And we have to destroy those targets and then they will accuse us that we attack Armenian territory. They want it. They want to invite third parties to the conflict that these parties defend themselves and provide for them another 30 years of illegal occupation. Ceasefire okay, but on what conditions? Conditions must be that they withdraw from the territories. I said just two days ago, let them start withdrawal, let us have the timetable for withdrawal, let them undertake serious obligations proved by mediators and also obey the ceasefire regime and of course we will also do the same. Why should we need this military clash? We need our territories back by peaceful means and we demonstrated for 28 years our willingness to have peaceful settlement. During this 28 years there have been times of clashes and the biggest is now. There was another one four years ago. So, that is our point and I think it is absolutely reasonable taking into account what I said about political and military provocations from Armenia.

Correspondent: So, when we look at the latest conflict, Azerbaijan military gained some advance and took back some of the villages around the Fuzuli district. Does it mean that Azerbaijan is not going to withdraw from those areas that they have regained control?

President Ilham Aliyev: No, of course, not. Because these areas belong to us. These areas are the areas of our ancient land, these areas are where our people lived for centuries and they were occupied and destroyed by Armenians. There are pictures in internet of what happened to Fuzuli what happened to Aghdam, what happened to other cities and villages of Azerbaijan in the southern-eastern part of the occupied territories. There are also destructions in the districts of Lachin and Kalbajar where they had some illegal settlements. But not as heavy as in this area. Therefore, it is our land, we regained it. We regained it by force, we regained it giving our victims. We will never step back from them. We will live there. Our people who were forcefully deported from those territories, today live with one dream, with one goal, for almost 30 years, to go back. I can tell you there was a very illustrative example when in April 2016 we liberated part of the territories and gained as a result of the Armenian aggressions we launched a counter-attack. And one of the villages which was destroyed by Armenians, and Azerbaijanis could not return there, because Armenians' positions were on the mountains. We built for refugees the new village and even those who never saw that land, those who were born after, all of them returned to Jojug Marjanly. I said Jojug Marjanly is a symbol of our dignity, a symbol of our will. Jojug Marjanly is a symbol of our return, and I said our return starts now. So, I am sure that all those who have been deported from those territories will go back. There is nowhere to go back, because everything is destroyed, everything. Not a single building, everything was destroyed and of course, we will help, we will rebuild the cities. We will rebuild the villages. We will return their initial names because Armenians committed a cultural genocide against us. They destroyed all the mosques on the occupied territories. They keep pigs and cows in the mosques, thus insulting the feelings of all the Muslims. They changed the names of our cities, changed the names of our villages. All the names will go back. We will go back to our lands. This is our legitimate right, this is a historical task for us and I am sure we will succeed.

Correspondent: The Caucasus region is a very complex one. Not only in terms of geography, but also when it comes to culture, ethnicity and social structures. Do you believe in peoples' rights to self-determination?

President Ilham Aliyev: You know, this is the point which Armenian propaganda often uses thus, trying to mislead the international public opinion, which of course broadly ordinary people. They are not specialists in the international law. But there are very clear identification of the basic principles of international law, which have the reflection in the Helsinki Final Act. Principle of territorial integrity is prevailing, self-determination is one of the important principles of international law. But if we go back to UN Charter, if we go back to Helsinki Final Act, we will see that the self-determination should not damage the territorial integrity of the countries. And other important point, the territorial integrity of the country

cannot be changed by force, and cannot be changed without an agreement of the people of the country. Therefore, in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of course, self-determination is not working the way how Armenians want to do it. And another argument, Armenian people already self-determined themselves. They have independent Armenian state. Today Armenians live everywhere. They live in France, they live in America, they live in Russia, they live in Middle East, let them ask for self-determination in those countries. What would be the reaction of authorities of those countries if Armenians would ask the land which does not belong to them and ask this land only because they now became majority? Their tactics which they use for many-many years to come, to ask for support, to ask for land, and then to start changing the historical identity of the territory, making fake news about their so-called ancient history, and demand those lands for them. Those countries which want to give self-determination to Nagorno-Karabakh, let them give part of their land to Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, take them and give self-determination there. I would see what will be their reaction.

Correspondent: The way I think we have right now you have the Russians, Iranians, Turks, the French and the Americans signaling concerns over the conflict. Could this conflict ever become a regional one?

President Ilham Aliyev: I don't think so. I think there is no ground for that and we are strongly against this conflict to transform into a regional. That's what Armenia wants to do. Therefore, they invent fake news about some external support to Azerbaijan. But at the same time, they are asking for external support for themselves. That's why I have the feelings that the main target now when they suffer a very serious defeat on the battle field, they want to make this conflict regional. But I am sure that the countries which you mentioned will never allow it to happen. Because security in our region is in the interests of all the regional countries and among those countries which you mention - Turkey, Russia, Iran are regional countries. Other countries have nothing to do here in the region. And they are not regional countries. They have the mandate, to facilitate the negotiations because that happened in 1992. We are not responsible, me personally for this composition of the Minsk Group. If we decided today about the composition of any Contact Group which could facilitate peace, of course composition would have been completely different. I don't want now to specify, but some countries would not have a place in this group because of their biased behavior. So, we need to do everything, especially the regional countries, to stay away from the conflict, not to interfere in any sense in the conflict and give the signal to Armenia: Stop occupation! Stop occupation and then you will see the benefits. Then you will integrate with the regional economic, investments, energy, transportation projects, which Armenian leadership for many years deprived Armenians from because of this aggression. So we need to do everything that this conflict stops as soon as possible, the resolution is found as soon as possible. We are not in the position to listen to statements as 'stop it and we will work, we will negotiate, we will help'. We heard it many times, we don't have time to wait another 30 years. The conflict must be resolved now. Those who want to help Armenia, their so-called close partners, let them help by telling them 'leave the territories, demonstrate your will, stop firing', tell that 'today or tomorrow only one week I will leave Aghdam, next time, next week I will leave Fuzuli, next week I will leave Kalbajar' etc. and we will stop. So, this is a very fair position, this is a position aimed at peace not at war.

Correspondent: What about Armenia's claims that Ankara is militarily involved in this conflict with their planes etc.?

President Ilham Aliyev: This is a false information, it has no proofs. I already made statements about that. Turkey is our brotherly country from the very first day of Armenian attack. From the very first hour Turkey expressed its full support to Azerbaijan. My brother, President Erdogan many times made very important statements. And yesterday speaking at the opening session of the parliament he made another very important statement that Turkey is next to Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan is not alone. We feel the support. We are very grateful to our Turkish brothers and President, and other officials. But Turkey in no other way is involved in the conflict. One of the Armenian fake news, which now is not any longer in the media, was that Turkish F-16 shot down Armenia's SU-25. This is fake news. Where are the proofs? No proofs. Every plane, which lands and takes off is in the computer. Everybody can see what is happening. And I wonder why Minsk Group co-chair countries France, United States, Russia do not comment on that. They do not comment on this fake news, some of them comment on other fake news that Azerbaijan with Turkey invited terrorists here.

Correspondent: This is what I would like to ask Mr. President Armenia also accuses Turkey for transferring Syrian opposition fighters to Azerbaijan.

President Ilham Aliyev: This is fake news. Absolutely. The same fake news as they said that Turkish F-16 shot down the SU-25. The SU-25 had an accident. I was informed it hit the mountain because of unexperienced pilot.

Correspondent: But they say that they have evidence.

President Ilham Aliyev: Let them show it. Where is evidence? Not only Armenia, unfortunately President of France, I heard yesterday, made a statement about that and he called me on the 27th in the evening and I said 'it is wrong, it is false'. And he made the statements without any evidence. Let him give us evidence. Let him give us proofs. Only words. We can also say many words. But we don't. We behave in a responsible way. There is not a single evidence of any foreign presence in Azerbaijan. What we do, we do ourselves. We have a capable army. We have enough people in our army, we have enough people in our reserves. I announced a partial mobilization, which will allow us to involve tens of thousands of reservists. If necessary, so we don't need it. Armenia needs it, because Armenian population is declining. And it is only two million people. Therefore, they themselves now recruit people from Middle East and we have evidences, and not only of Armenian origin. By the way, it doesn't make any difference whether it is of Armenian origin coming from Middle East or non-Armenian origin. If anybody comes from outside to fight as a mercenary that should be internationally addressed. So, it is this accusations that absolutely groundless, and we reject them, and we demand the evidences to be put on the table.

Correspondent: Will you also be presenting your evidence on the foreign mercenaries that Armenia brings?

President Ilham Aliyev: We have already some intelligence information and plus, just yesterday I was shown that there are videos in the internet as the people from Middle East are sitting together with Armenian soldiers and they have their uniform, they have Armenian national flag, and they sit together and discuss, you know it is without voice. But it is enough, I think. And they must be responsible for that.

Correspondent: So, could diplomacy ever work or is the war only solution for you?

President Ilham Aliyev: I said already diplomacy can work if Armenia will comply with the international law, will start immediate withdrawal from part of the territories on the time table. And of course, we need to restore territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. By the way, when we were discussing the issues on negotiation table before this government in Armenia came to power, one of the first items was that the conflict must be resolved on the basis of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. It must be restored. That is what we demand and I think we have a right to demand it.

Correspondent: President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, thank you very much for talking to Al Jazeera.

President Ilham Aliyev: Thank you.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

04.10.2020 [21:30]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has addressed the nation.
AZERTAC presents the nationwide address of the head of state.

Nationwide address of President Ilham Aliyev

Dear fellow countrymen!

Today, the city of Jabrayil and nine villages of Jabrayil district have been liberated from occupation. I heartily congratulate all the people of Azerbaijan on this historic event.

I sincerely congratulate all our soldiers and officers who took an active part in the liberation of Jabrayil District and other occupied territories. As a result of their heroism and courage, our native lands have returned to us today. May Allah rest all our martyrs who died in these bloody battles in peace. May Allah sending healing to our wounded soldiers.

After many years, the city of Jabrayil has been liberated. Jabrayil is ours!

Four years ago, the reconstruction of the village of Jojug Marjanly in Jabrayil district began. The heights liberated as a result of a successful operation allowed the residents the opportunity to return to the village of Jojug Marjanly in Jabrayil district. We have built a beautiful town there. I said at the opening of the settlement that Jojug Marjanly is a symbol of our invincible will. Jojug Marjanly shows that the Azerbaijani people will never put up with the occupation, and our return to other occupied lands began with Jojug Marjanly. I think that the liberation of most of Jabrayil district and the city of Jabrayil today is of special importance.

As you know, Azerbaijan has been fighting to restore its territorial integrity for a week now. On the battlefield, our soldiers and officers show heroism, inflict crushing blows on the enemy, put the enemy in its place, drive the enemy out of our lands at the cost of their lives. This glorious mission will find its worthy place in history.

Today we are writing a new history of our people and state, a glorious history. We are restoring historical justice today because the land of Karabakh is our ancient historical land. The people of Azerbaijan have lived, created and built in these lands for centuries. But for many years, for almost 30 years, Armenian executioners have occupied our lands, destroyed all our historical, religious and cultural sites.

We will restore all our cities. We will restore all our mosques destroyed by the Armenians. Life will return to these places. We have put an end to the attempts of Armenians to change our historical names and falsify history, to erase the historical and cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people. The historical names of our settlements are being restored and they will be restored.

We are fighting on our own lands. Our territorial integrity must be restored and we are on the right path. Our soldiers are saviors because they are liberating their native land from invaders.

Today, the people of Jabrayil, of course, are happy, as indeed are all the people of Azerbaijan. Yesterday, our ancient settlement, the Sugovushan settlement was liberated from occupation. All the people of Azerbaijan celebrated this historic event, congratulated each other and could not hold back their tears. These were the tears of joy. Azerbaijan shed tears in the early 1990s but those were tears of defeat, tears of tragedy.

Today, the people of Azerbaijan are happy. I would like to list the names of the settlements liberated today for the people of Jabrayil and all the people of Azerbaijan. Today, the glorious Azerbaijani Army liberated the following settlements: Jabrayil city, Karkhulu village, Shukurbayli village, Yukhari Maralyan village, Charakan village, Dashkasan village, Horovlu village, Dejal village, Mahmudlu village, Jafarabad village.

I am appealing to the residents of these villages. Your long wait is coming to an end, and let all our other refugees and IDPs know that we will return them to their ancestral lands. By force! We wanted this issue to be resolved through negotiations and we were patient. We have always been fair in the negotiations. We wanted what is ours. We have never set our eyes on anyone else's lands. But we have always said that they are ours, our people's, our nation's, they must return to us, they must return through negotiations. But these talks have, in fact, led to the freezing of the conflict, as was calculated in advance. Can negotiations

go on for 30 years?! Is it possible to keep the Azerbaijani people in such a situation for 30 years?! For 30 years, we have lived with hopes that the international community will resolve this issue. Countries and international organizations involved in resolving this issue will have their say. The world's highest international body, the UN Security Council, will work to implement its resolutions. These resolutions have been on paper for 27 years. For 27 years, we have shown a constructive position, a fair position at all times – in all periods of negotiations. But what did we see in return? The aggressor became even more impudent. The aggressor's greed grew even more as they set their sights on our ancestral lands. As a result, all the occupied lands were attributed to the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic", new maps were published and all the occupied territories were portrayed as Nagorno-Karabakh. What happened after that? Then they stated that they would not return an inch of the lands to Azerbaijan.

We have been saying that this, after all, is contrary to the subject of negotiations. After all, our main point of hope in the talks was that it was stated that the occupied lands would be gradually returned to Azerbaijan. We also agreed to return them in stages and peacefully. Let five districts be returned at the first stage, two at in the second stage, then let the Azerbaijanis return to Nagorno-Karabakh, return to Shusha, and then let the Azerbaijani and Armenian peoples live together as we once did. This is a fair position. This position is in compliance with all norms of international law. What did we want? We wanted this much, we were and are entitled to that. But what did we see?! We saw that they want to break the will of the Azerbaijani people. We saw that a new war is being waged against us, that we are being threatened with a new war. We saw that in July, for no apparent reason, our city of Tovuz and other settlements came under fire, our servicemen were killed, one civilian was killed. We saw that a sabotage group was sent in August and the head of that sabotage group was neutralized and detained. Now he is testifying and saying that he was sent to commit acts of terror. Is this a commitment to the process of negotiations?! Then, the prime minister of Armenia makes nonsensical statements, falsifies history, tries to deceive his people and the international community. A year ago, he torpedoed the whole process of negotiations by saying that "Karabakh is Armenia, full stop", making it meaningless. Attempts to change the format of talks, the words that "Azerbaijan must negotiate with the so-called puppet junta" completely contradict the negotiations. Did he get an adequate response? I have repeatedly told Minsk Group co-chairs, the co-chairs' ambassadors, other international organizations and the European Union to influence Armenia, to impose sanctions and put pressure on it. This can't be allowed to happen. If there is no strong pressure, Armenia will become even more impudent, even more impertinent and start making new claims. They did not listen to me. I wanted this issue to be resolved peacefully. They did not listen to me. Did they think that the Azerbaijani people and I, the President of Azerbaijan, would put up with this situation?! They thought that our holy city of Shusha would be trampled by the Armenians and I would put up with that?! Are we supposed to negotiate with the Armenian executioners who have dealt a blow to the history of the Azerbaijani people? The people of Azerbaijan were insulted when the head of the so-called regime held a "swearing-in ceremony" in Shusha. Let's see now where he will hold the swearing-in ceremony now, a funeral ceremony will be held! He has now run away and went into hiding like a mouse. Come on out! The prime minister of Armenia dances in Shusha, on the Jidir plain, and thinks that we will put up with that?! They are wrong! We will never put up with that. What does it mean to move the parliament of the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic" to Shusha?! Again, it is an attempt to insult the Azerbaijani people. What does it mean to build a new road from Armenia to Jabrayil?! This means that there will be illegal settlement. Armenians are already being brought from Lebanon and other places, and being resettled in our ancient city Shusha, and this is shown on television in violation of international conventions, in violation of the Geneva Convention. Does anyone say a word to them?! I have asked all our foreign diplomatic missions to raise the issue, tell the UN, the OSCE, the European Union, other organizations that it is illegal! Illegal settlement is a crime! Was there a reaction to that?! Did the Minsk Group make a statement?! It did not! Did the European Union make one?! It did not! They said that we are not interested in that. If they are not interested, then don't be interested now. Why are you raising a hue and cry now then? What are these tricks for? There are slandering against Azerbaijan. Some countries, European countries are accusing us. Let them go and look in the mirror. These accusations have no basis. Someone says that they will not allow Azerbaijan to conquer Nagorno-Karabakh. Nagorno-Karabakh is ours, it is our land, we must return there, we are returning there and we will return there!

Therefore, the first culprit in the current situation is the Armenian leadership. At the same time, there are circles of some countries that are indifferent to this issue, always support Armenia and want to

perpetuate this occupation. Azerbaijan is resolving this issue on its own, and I told Armenia before the events of 27 September – let's fight one on one. Let's see who is who! So what happened? Pashinyan calls one world leader a day. Every day! I did not call anyone. I did not call any world leader. I had contacts and they called me. There is no world leader left who he would not call, beg, send an emissary, implore and kneel to. This is the end of it. If he had spoken to us in a normal language, if he had not desecrated our holy city, of course, we would live with the hope that this issue would be resolved through negotiations. But every step was a provocation, every step was an insult, and he thinks that we will put up with that?! Now we have shown who is who. We are driving them away like dogs! Azerbaijani soldiers drive them away like dogs! The Azerbaijani flag is being raised in the occupied territories! Azerbaijani soldiers are standing in their trenches! Their posts are in our hands! We are driving their tanks! Their other weapons are in our hands, their trucks are in our hands! We are fulfilling our mission of salvation and we will complete it!

Let the Armenian leadership think carefully before it is too late. He put forward seven conditions to us. Who are you to put forward condition to us?! Let's see what your conditions are now! You fall to your knees begging for a ceasefire. The ceasefire was restored for two years at the request of the Armenian prime minister. He told me that the situation inside was difficult, that he was being squeezed here and there, asked for some time to solve this problem because he had some new ideas. He said he had drawn a line through everything that happened in the past, asked for a chance, for some time. I said OK. But what happened then? A year later, he said that “Karabakh is Armenia”. Let him say that “Karabakh is Armenia” now. The calls I have been receiving and the conversations I have been having during the calls are, of course, confidential, and in some cases they are asking me what our condition is. My condition is the same – to leave our lands, to leave them, to stop the confrontation. Not in word but in deed. Let him say that he recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, as stated in the fundamental principles. Let him say that he will withdraw his troops from the occupied territories, as stated in the fundamental principles. Let him say that he apologizes to the Azerbaijani people and say that Karabakh is not Armenia. The last condition is to give us a schedule for a withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories. Then, of course, we will restore the ceasefire. But it is difficult to do it now when fierce battles underway. Because if we stop, they will not stop. But at least it would be possible to work on that. But requests to stop and give them some time... Why should we give them time? Give them time to gather strength? Give them time to attack us again? Do they really think we are so naïve? Give them time to come to the talks... I said what I needed, and this is all.

Today, the liberation of Jabrayil from occupation should be a lesson to Armenia and its benefactors. I said before the events. He committed a provocation there, we taught him a lesson, but it wasn't learned. He committed a provocation here, we taught him another lesson, but it wasn't learned either. Finally, this time he committed yet another provocation, we taught him yet another lesson, and it was learned this time round.

We are on the side of justice. We live in the most glorious moments of history. The Azerbaijani people are an ancient people. There have been many glorious moments, events and victories in our history. Today's events have a special place among them. We are restoring justice, restoring our territorial integrity, fulfilling the hopes of the Azerbaijani people and will continue to do so. We are right and we will win! Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Al ArabiyaTV channel

05.10.2020 [06:30]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by Al Arabiya TV channel.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

Host: So, what was a cold war in the past has become fierce burning all over Azerbaijan and Armenia, a struggle which comes back from the past and moves the sounds of the shelling. Nagorno-Karabakh is in the headlines again and the word expands outside it emits interventions from international parties and warning of the holistic war which could turn to a regional war. The means of the solution international preventions will be the topics of our discussion with the president of Azerbaijan, President Aliyev. So joining us from Baku, President Ilham Aliyev. Welcome, sir.

President Ilham Aliyev: Thank you.

Host: President, we will start from these developments and the crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia. So, what is the threshold of this escalation?

President Ilham Aliyev: On the 27th of September Armenia launched a military attack on our military positions and civilians, our civilians suffered from that. We have victims among civilians. Information this morning was that 22 civilians were killed and 73 were wounded. Unfortunately, today we have dozens of wounded and again killed people, our ordinary villagers. We had to respond, and our response was adequate. We launched a counter-attack and as a result of this counter-attack we managed to suppress the firing positions of Armenia, which are situated on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. We managed to liberate some of the territories, several villages and today we liberated the city of Jabrayil which has been under Armenian occupation for 27 years. Our successful military operation continues. And we are fully determined to liberate our land, and to restore our territorial integrity.

Host: President Aliyev, apparently things are getting out of hand, or out of control between you and Armenia. This expansion in the operations, military operations, is there a limit for it?

President Ilham Aliyev: Well, I don't think that things are going out of control. It is under control of Azerbaijani army. We are now in the offensive operation, our goal is to liberate our territories. I made a proposal to mediators and also, I made an appeal to Armenian people, to make responsible their government for occupation and to stop occupation. If Armenia agrees on that, if they will start liberating occupied territories which they keep illegally under control for almost 30 years, the war will stop. We don't need war. We were in the process of negotiations since 1992. And during this almost 30 years, there have been zero progress on negotiation table. Armenia did not want to implement resolutions of United Nations Security Council demanding full, immediate and unconditional withdrawal from our territories. On the contrary, their military political leadership was trying to occupy new lands. They were trying to launch, and they actually did in July, they launched a new military attack on Azerbaijan. So, we have to defend ourselves, defend our people and restore internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan, which is recognized by all countries of world.

Host: President Aliyev, if Armenia does not respond to this initiative which you have presented, this escalation will continue and there are no fear of the lives of the civilians and the cost will be very high.

President Ilham Aliyev: Armenia is brutally violating the Geneva convention, not only by using heavy artillery to bomb our cities and villages, but also providing illegal resettlement of foreigners to the occupied territories. We want our territories to be liberated. We counted very much on the mediators. We have a mandate to facilitate finding a solution between the two countries. But instead of showing constructive approach on the negotiation table, Armenia launched a military attack on us in July. And we gave them adequate response. They sent the sabotage group which was planning to commit terror acts and the head of the sabotage group was detained and he gives evidence. And in September they launched artillery bombardment on our villages and cities, and more than 500 hundred houses of ordinary Azerbaijanis, who live close to the area of the conflict have been completely demolished or damaged. Therefore, Armenia must stop these aggressive actions they must commit to withdrawal of their troops from our territory. They must give us a time-table, or withdrawal from occupied territories. Their prime minister

who said that ‘Karabakh is Armenia’ should now say that ‘Karabakh is not Armenia’ and after that, of course, we will be ready to put an end to hostility and to restore the ceasefire regime.

Host: But President Aliyev, through Al Arabiya the Armenian president talked about negotiations. He said that the solution is through negotiations. What do you respond?

President Ilham Aliyev: I agree. I also think that the solution is through negotiations but negotiations must have the substance. Armenia saying that ‘Karabakh is Armenia’, their prime minister said that, actually they destroy the principles on which the solution should be found. Because OSCE Minsk Group, whose co-chairs are Russia, United States and France, have elaborated for years during the negotiations the principles of settlement. And the first step in order to achieve the sustainable peace in our region, is the liberation of occupied territories. And when Armenian prime minister who came to power as a result of the coup d’etat two years ago, as a result of the so-called revolution which was sponsored by George Soros when he said that ‘Karabakh is Armenia’, he destroys the negotiation substance. There is nothing to talk about. Therefore, prime minister who is in charge in Armenia, must think very seriously about his destructive behavior, about his actions which led to military clash. We have been in the process of negotiations for 28 years and I had an experience in negotiations with the two former presidents of Armenia, and we were working in a more or less acceptable manner in order to find solution. We were making small steps but we were making steps. We were elaborating jointly with mediators the principles which should be the basis for settlement. And two years ago a person from the street who had no experience in political life, who in his all life was not even the head of a small company, who has no idea about geopolitics, who has no idea about international relations, who comes and he starts to destroy his own country and now Armenia is in crisis. He puts to prison the head of the major political party. He launches criminal investigation against two former presidents with whom I in different periods worked on negotiation. He establishes completely despotic regime, and destroys negotiation table. And what should we do? He makes insulting statements against Azerbaijan. He makes provocative steps and actually the mediators themselves were very embarrassed with this strange, to put it mildly, behavior. He destroys negotiation process. Therefore, I say, to go back to negotiations, first, Armenian prime minister should say that ‘Karabakh is not Armenia’. Because ‘Karabakh is Armenia’ is lie. Karabakh is Azerbaijan. He should say that he is committed to the principles which have been elaborated for 20 years, which provide return of occupied territories of Azerbaijan to us, to those who is the owner of those lands. He should give us now, after he launched this dirty military attack. He should give us a time-table of withdrawal from our cities. And we are ready to stop fire. Otherwise, we will do it by force, we will restore our territorial integrity by force and we will show him his place.

President Aliyev, I cannot interrupt, because of the translation but there are three points which I'd like to comment on your answer. Number 1 – you were saying that Armenia is going through a crisis but we see that the Armenian people supporting their leadership and they salute how their leadership is trying to preserve them or protect them. The second point, is the only condition for Armenia to withdraw or retreat from saying that Karabakh is Armenian or are there any conditions or preconditions to go back at the negotiation table. And the third, who are the countries which the mediators spoke of who felt embarrassed?

President Ilham Aliyev: The countries I already said the OSCE Minsk Group, the chairman of the Minsk Group of OSCE, Russia, United States and France and during the last years of my interaction with the representatives of this group, we had opportunity to exchange views. And neither myself nor them actually know what can be done in order to move negotiation forward. Because you know, negotiation principles and negotiation format has been established. It was not established unilaterally by Azerbaijan. It was proposed by the mediators and accepted by two countries, by Azerbaijan and Armenia. The format of negotiations is Azerbaijan and Armenia. This is a conflict between two countries. Prime Minister of Armenia said that is not a format which is acceptable. Azerbaijan has to negotiate with the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh republic”, which no country in the world recognizes, including Armenia itself. So, that was a deliberate act in order to disrupt negotiations because he knew that neither we, no mediators will accept it. And mediators Russia, United States, and France rejected this. Then, he said that ‘Karabakh is Armenia’ which none of his predecessors did before. None of them, because it means end of negotiations. Because the substance of negotiations is to return the territories to Azerbaijan by peaceful means, through negotiations. And then to provide the normal co-existence between Azerbaijani and Armenian community in Nagorno-Karabakh, because before the war, before Armenia occupied our territories, 25 percent of the

population of Nagorno-Karabakh were Azerbaijanis. But today, not only Nagorno-Karabakh is occupied but seven districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh where Armenian population did not exist, but where there have been more than 700,000 Azerbaijanis. All of them were expelled. All their houses are destroyed. All our historical monuments, including our mosques are destroyed by Armenian barbarians and now when we were coming closer to making a progress there is a change in government in Armenia. The new people, the new team has absolutely nothing to do with politics, comes to power, makes this destructive statements and actions, launches military aggression on us. What we were supposed to do? We have to defend ourselves. That's what we do and we will do it until our territorial integrity is restored.

Host: President Ilham Aliyev Russia and France also sent accusations to you in addition to for example Syrian mercenaries through Turkey. How do you respond to that?

President Ilham Aliyev: We reject it completely. I had received two phone calls from French president during this last ten days, or last week and I told him that give us evidence. There is not a single evidence of the so-called Syrian fighters on our territory. I asked him when he called me on 27 September, and since that time I don't have any evidence. If they have this evidence why they didn't provided to us. Then, when he called me couple of days ago, he raised this issue again. He said that they have intelligence information. I said share it with us. It's not appropriate to accuse a country without providing any evidence and proof. Today I don't have any single evidence from France about this unacceptable accusation. There is no foreign fighters on Azerbaijani soil and I told French president that our army is almost 100 thousand people. What we do now on the battle field is showed in internet, everybody can see how our modern drones destroy Armenian tanks and anti-air systems. Our army is liberating one village after another. Our flag is being raised on the territories which had been under occupation for so many years. So these accusations are absolutely groundless. Another thing which I can tell you that Armenians make another fake news as if Turkish F-16 shot down Armenian SU-25. And that was fake news. That fake news was introduced into the media, European politicians started to exploit this fake information, and now, when it is proven that it didn't happen, no one even apologized. I demand apology from those who accuse us. I demand them to be responsible, to control what they say. We are not a country which will tolerate accusation. We are not a country which will tolerate insult. If we start saying what we think, I think there will be a lot of turbulence in those countries. They should leave Azerbaijan alone. They should leave the region alone. We here on our land, our land is occupied. If France wants self-determination for Nagorno-Karabakh let them give city of Marseille which is almost half inhabited by Armenians and let them announce Nagorno-Karabakh republic. And let them give them independence. Let's give independence to Corsica. Let give independence to Basques. Why they demand independence for Nagorno-Karabakh from us. What right do they have to demand it from us? They should stop these accusations, they should stop attacking Azerbaijan and damaging our image. And if we will start to talk about mercenaries and terrorists, I think those who accuse us, will find themselves in very embarrassing position. They better look to the mirror first, before accusing us.

Host: In any case, some consider that if this crisis expands then your lands could turn into a battlefield for struggles where you have no benefit from, like a proxy war on your land. Don't you hear that? It could become a struggle of the region

President Ilham Aliyev: No. There is no proxy war. Azerbaijan is an independent country. Our independence is recognized by the all international community. Azerbaijan has a very strong position on international arena. I can only give you two examples of our achievements. Several years ago with the support of 155 countries Azerbaijan was elected to United Nations Security Council. That's because of our independent policy and because of our country being very responsible member of international community. Last year we had a Summit of Non-Alignment Movement in Baku with the participation of 120 countries. And Azerbaijan assumed chairmanship in Non-Aligned Movement. Unanimous decision of 120 countries were to award Azerbaijan with this honorable duty. Can proxy country get this support? Proxy countries are miserable. No one respects them. No one pays attention to them. Today Azerbaijani word is important for the world. Today without Azerbaijan no project in the region, political, economic, energy, transportation can be achieved. And those who tell us proxy, they are proxy themselves. Let them look at the mirror. They are used to look to the countries from top to the down. We are not in that position. We defend our dignity, we defend our independence. No country in the world has a right to interfere into our affairs as they should understand it. It is in the interests of Azerbaijan to restore its territorial integrity, millions people of Azerbaijani are waiting for their time to go back to their native land, and we the government will provide

it. We will return our people to their homeland, we will restore our cities, restore our villages. We will raise the flag of Azerbaijan on all the occupied territories.

Host: President Aliyev, Europe says that there is no solution for this crisis between you and Armenia, no military solution. How do you respond to that, for this European position?

President Ilham Aliyev: I hear a lot about there is no military solution to the conflict. First, I do not agree with that. Second, okay, if there is no military solution, give us non-military solution. Give us diplomatic solution, comply with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. They were adopted by the highest international body of the world. And those resolutions demand, withdrawal of Armenian troops without any conditions from occupied territories. And we have been in negotiations since 1992, and during these 28 years had there been any diplomatic solution? Did mediators or other international organizations provide us with the political solution? No. They made this conflict frozen but it is not frozen. So, how long we are going to wait? Another 30 years? How long Armenians will continue to sit on our land and not allow our people to go back to their homes. If international community cannot provide implementation of international resolutions, Azerbaijan will do it itself. That's what is happening. And once again, I tell all those who want to facilitate, and also, Armenian leadership until it's too late, stop occupation now. Make a statement, that you accept principles of the settlement. You accept territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, you give us a time-table for withdrawal from all occupied territories, and prime minister of Armenia, who on Azerbaijani territories said that 'Karabakh is Armenia' should apologize in front of Azerbaijani people and he should say 'Karabakh is not Armenia' and then, we will stop.

Host: President Aliyev, one last word, after all which you have mentioned to Armenia, is there anything else would you like to say through our news channel to the Armenian people and all those officials in Armenia.

President Ilham Aliyev: You know, a couple of days ago, I visited the wounded Azerbaijani soldiers who suffered from Armenian attack. Speaking to them, I made an appeal to Armenian people. And I understood that for them what I was saying was not something very common. That's not probably the only thing which they wanted to hear. Because they were almost killed by Armenians. Sitting in front of them and expressing my gratitude to them, to their parents that they grew such heroes for us, I said, my appeal is also to Armenian people. Make responsible your government for what it has done. Don't send your children to Azerbaijan, don't send your children to occupied territories. Today, 90 percent of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh army, consists of Armenian citizens. Stop this occupation. Leave Azerbaijani territory. Live on your own land and we will then have peace. We will try again to restore normal relations which Azerbaijani and Armenian people had before. We will try. It will be not easy. But we will try to be neighbors, to live side by side. That is my, how to say, word to Armenian people. To Armenian government, I have nothing to say. I just already said what they have to do. If they want ceasefire, I already said apologize in front of us, give us a time-table of withdrawal. Not just words that we will stop it and we will negotiate. It will not work. Time-table day one, day two, day three, when they liberate which territory, and prime minister of Armenia who insulted the feelings of Azerbaijanis dancing on our sacred land of Shusha with his gang and saying that 'Karabakh is Armenia' should apologize and say that 'Karabakh is not Armenia'. That's my word.

Host: President of Azerbaijan, thank you very much for joining us from Baku. Thank you very much, President.

President Ilham Aliyev Thank you.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by TRT Haber TV channel

05.10.2020 [17:15]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by TRT Haber (News) TV channel.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

- Mr. President and Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev, welcome to TRT Haber. Thank you for your time. How much of the occupied land has been taken back so far? What is the current stage of the fighting and is it going according to plan?

- Yes, everything is going according to plan. So far, all the tasks we had set for ourselves have been fulfilled. The Azerbaijani Army is advancing successfully. Many settlements, one city and several villages were liberated from occupation. Currently, fierce battles are taking place in various directions.

As you know, the city of Jabrayil and several villages of Jabrayil district were liberated yesterday. I hope that the Azerbaijani Army will continue to successfully fulfill its mission and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan will be restored. This is our main goal. This goal will secure historical justice. At the same time, it should also be viewed as respect for international law because Nagorno-Karabakh and other occupied territories are the historical lands of Azerbaijan. From the point of view of international law, these lands belong to the Azerbaijani state.

- In response to the ceasefire calls, you said that you did not call any country's leader, but simply assessed the situation with those who wanted to talk. You stressed that the prime minister of Armenia Pashinyan, as usual, called and begged many heads of state. Based on your past experience, do you think that other countries' ceasefire calls will work this time?

- The ceasefire must be provided under certain conditions. The calls we have received so far are simply intended to ensure a ceasefire, stop the war and then continue discussions. It is not being elaborated to us what kind of discussions there may be and on what basis they may be continued. We have been involved in these discussions for almost 30 years, and we have been doing that with certain hopes. If we hadn't had hopes, of course, we would not have participated in these discussions. Discussions have always been based on existing principles. Among these principles is the issue of restoring the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Issues of a gradual liberation of the occupied territories, their return to us and the maintaining of peace were the subjects of discussion. But Armenia has launched a new attack on us, violating the principles we have learned from the very beginning. Of course, we launched a counter-offensive and are liberating our lands with the help of Azerbaijani soldiers. Therefore, the issue of restoring the ceasefire alone cannot be discussed. We have demands. I have already officially stated this. We must have very serious guarantees. International mediators must confirm these guarantees to us. At the same time, we must be given a schedule for Armenia's withdrawal from the occupied territories, the dates on which it will leave each district. Of course, then the war will stop. We want this issue to be resolved peacefully, but it must be resolved. Some mediators want a ceasefire. The ceasefire has been in force since 1994. Why has this issue not been resolved over the years? Why were the resolutions of the United Nations not implemented? Why weren't any sanctions imposed on the aggressor state? All these questions remain valid. There are no answers to these questions. Today, as the glorious Army of Azerbaijan conducts its successful operations and liberates our ancestral lands, these calls are being made: do not move forward, take a break. War has its own rules, its own laws. Every day has its own significance. If we take a break, the other side will gather strength and deploy additional forces. Their speeches already show that they are also involving Armenians living outside Armenia in this war. Thus, they want to take this war out of the regional arena and turn it into a global war. Therefore, our position on the ceasefire is quite explicit. We are ready for that but there are certain conditions that I have also announced.

- You have. You have mentioned guarantees. What kind of guarantee do you mean?

- First guarantee – the prime minister of Armenia said on our lands a year ago that "Karabakh is Armenia". He should apologize to the people of Azerbaijan. Secondly, he must say that Karabakh is not Armenia. Third, he must respect the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Fourth, he must declare the dates on which Armenian armed forces will leave each district. These conditions must be approved by the Minsk Group co-chairs. In that case, of course, the ceasefire will be restored, this issue will be resolved through discussion and the Azerbaijani people will return to their native lands. But we need to know when this will

happen because we have been waiting for 30 years. The promises given to us and the words spoken for 30 years have not been implemented. The Azerbaijani people can no longer stand this. The Azerbaijani state cannot stand this any longer. We need to be told specific dates of when they will vacate each district.

- A lot has been said in the 30 years, as you have said. How will you trust the word that will be given now?

- This is exactly why I say that in addition to words, we must be given specific dates. If on that date – I do not know whether or not it will be given – the Armenian armed forces do not withdraw from the known regions, then we will not observe the ceasefire.

- Can this confrontation lead to a bigger war, a big regional crisis? Are you worried?

- Armenia already wants that. Their ugly deeds are calculated for this. We believe that this should not be allowed. This is a war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We did not start this war. We are not the cause of this war. We are simply defending ourselves and want our lands back. We do not set our sights on Armenian lands. As a result of the clashes started by Armenians on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in July, the Azerbaijani Army did not cross into Armenian territory, although we could have done that. We struck them hard and they retreated. There were no obstacles in front of us. We didn't do that because, as I said, we do not have any military targets on the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Today, Armenia is attacking Azerbaijan from the territory of Armenia. Yesterday, Ganja was hit from the territory of Armenia, Mingachevir was hit. We have a big station there. One of the shells hit the station. True, their shells are such that some of them did not explode. Some were destroyed by our air defense systems in the air. They are provoking us to attack Armenia and strike at Armenia. Then they will start telling the whole world that Azerbaijan is attacking us, save Armenia, that is, come to Armenia's rescue.

- If these attacks continue from within the borders of Armenia, will you defend your current position again or...?

- It is too early in the day to say that. We will look at the course of the conflict. In any case, the source of every blow to us is a legitimate target for us. We will have to hit these targets. Today, the Azerbaijani Army hits only military targets. This is already clear to everyone in the videos. Everyone can see that. We are fighting only against the occupying army of Armenia. We have never fought against the civilian population. We do not and will not do that.

- I saw in Gashalti Garagoyunlu that five Azerbaijani citizens, including two children, were killed. The ultimate goal of the campaign that started with the Azerbaijani Army's response to the Armenian attacks of 27 September is already obvious: resolute liberation of Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenian occupation. You said from day one that from now on the fighting will be stopped only after an unconditional withdrawal of Armenia from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. You stick to the same position, right?

- Yes, there is no change in my position. We must resolve this issue on the basis of historical justice. Historical justice says that Karabakh is the land of ancient Azerbaijan, and all historical documents, all our historical sites confirm it. At the same time, we have always been very positive at the negotiating table and the proposals on the table make it possible to resolve this issue. They state that there should be a step-by-step solution. At the first stage, Armenians must leave five districts, at the next stage they must leave two more districts, then Azerbaijanis expelled from Nagorno-Karabakh must return to Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha, life is restored between two communities, the Armenian-Azerbaijani border is opened, trade begins, then people come into contact with each other and thus peace comes to the region. So this is our position, and this is the attitude of international mediators and co-chairs. Armenia does not accept this. In addition, the Armenian defense minister said a few months ago that we must start a new war for new territories.

- There are three co-chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – the United States, Russia and France. They are calling for a ceasefire. Has your answer changed? If your condition is not met, is there a possibility of a ceasefire before the Armenians withdraw from the occupied territories?

- There is no change in our position. I said this to you again today. We are even ready to start working on a ceasefire if we are given the dates for the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from our lands. But we must also remember that restoring the ceasefire is not an easy task because a ceasefire is not restored unilaterally. There are very serious battles at the moment. Both sides should tell their soldiers and officers on the ground. One side may follow it, but the other may not. So it is a very difficult process. But if we are

given the dates for the withdrawal, of course, we will give this instruction. Then, if the co-chairs of the Minsk Group and other countries, if possible, join it, the ceasefire can be restored and thus the fighting can be stopped.

- What do you mean by possible countries?

- Turkey. Turkey is a strong state, a country with great potential in the world, it is our neighbor, the neighbor of Armenia, the neighbor of the South Caucasus. Therefore, of course, Turkey must be active in this process, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Turkish brothers on my own behalf, on behalf of the Azerbaijani people, especially my dear brother, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkey's support from the first hours is of special importance. It is not just support for their brothers. This is why we, all the people of Azerbaijan, express deep gratitude for this. At the same time, Turkey's determination is very important so that these battles do not escalate. Turkey has said that we stand by Azerbaijan, we are with Azerbaijan until the end. Azerbaijan is on the path of truth, justice is on the side of Azerbaijan, and this was a warning to many other actors. Therefore, Turkey must be involved in the subsequent peace process. Of course, the peace process will begin, war cannot last forever, and the sooner the better. This is our opinion, and a lasting peace can be established in the region.

- Mr. President, when you say the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, you are leaving out France.

- France is leaving itself out, not me. During the entire process, we treated the co-chairs equally, and I have repeatedly said in my speeches that Azerbaijan has different relations with each country. Of course, the level of these relations is different. At the same time, we do not separate these countries on this issue, and I must say that these countries were united throughout the whole process until recently. They were neutral, that is, they did not take sides. However, we knew that there was probably some bias in their hearts. This is natural. But they never showed it in official steps and in contacts with us.

- You urged French President Macron to apologize.

- Yes, of course, because he accused us. He threw things at us that were not true. This is unacceptable for our country.

- What were the accusations?

- He said that Azerbaijan, together with Turkey, brought terrorists to the region. His said this in a statement. He also said that "Azerbaijan wants to conquer Nagorno-Karabakh and we will not allow that". Nagorno-Karabakh is our land. Can a state conquer its own lands? In other words, doesn't the co-chair country know that the Armenians have illegally settled in these lands and destroyed all our historical sites, mosques, graves and razed our houses to the ground? Look at the images of Aghdam and Fuzuli. They keep pigs and cows in our half-destroyed mosques. This is an insult to all Muslims. Don't they see it? Therefore, the words "Azerbaijan wants to conquer Nagorno-Karabakh and we will not allow that" are unacceptable. This is why France is already excluding itself from this equal trio, and we cannot remain silent about it.

- The United Nations Security Council has historic decisions on this issue.

- Of course, they voted for them themselves. They voted in 1993, so they should respect their own vote.

- With your permission, I have a few more questions. On the roads leading to the front line, in the cities and villages we visited and in the capital Baku last night, we saw the Turkish flag flying right next to the Azerbaijani. On buildings, offices, cars – everywhere. There is a similar picture in Turkey, as you may have seen in the news. After the victory in Jabrayil, there were demonstrations in support of brotherly Azerbaijan in the streets of Turkey.

- That's right. We are proud. And this is natural. Our brotherhood is eternal, and our brotherhood has stood the test of time. You know that the relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan are an example for the whole world. I have repeatedly spoken about this. I have repeatedly said at joint press conferences with my dear brother, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that there are no other countries in the world as close to each other as Turkey and Azerbaijan, and these are not just words. These are heartfelt sentiments. Our unity is based on our history, our common ethnic roots, language, religion and brotherhood. The historic service of my dear brother Tayyib Bey and myself is that we have created a modern Turkish-Azerbaijani union on a very strong foundation. Turkish flags are already everywhere in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijani flags are everywhere in Turkey. We are not separate from each other, we are together. These events have once again shown that Turkey was the first to support us unequivocally and decisively. The very bold and resolute statements of the President of Turkey were a warning to many countries – stay away, do not

interfere, Azerbaijan is not alone, it is with Turkey, and Azerbaijan is always with Turkey! We support each other in all matters, on all platforms, and our unity must last forever.

- In the meantime, I would like to mention Pakistan. I see their flags everywhere too. Where do you think Russia stands? Because Russia has a special significance.

- I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all other friendly and brotherly countries. After Turkey, the second country that supported us was Pakistan, then Afghanistan, and then several other countries. I thank each of them, the presidents of those countries. In this difficult period, of course, their solidarity and support is very important for us and gives us moral strength.

Russia is our neighbor. Our relations with Russia are developing successfully. Today, the relations between Russia and Azerbaijan are at a very high level in many areas. Both countries view this relationship as a strategic partnership, which is confirmed by the joint agreements. Russia acts as a very responsible and large country. Positive messages are coming from Russia, and support for any party is not a topic of discussion. However, Armenia had high hopes for that. Armenia's goal in taking the conflict out of the region is to engage Russia. Why is Armenia currently attacking Azerbaijan from the territory of Armenia? Exactly to make us strike back, so that they could appeal to the general secretariat of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, of which they are a member together with Russia and other countries, and say that Azerbaijan is attacking us, come and help us. Why did they commit this provocation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in July? Tovuz is located far from the Karabakh region. What goals did they have there – one goal was to make us launch an attack, cross the state border – as I said, we had such an opportunity – and then to ask the organization to come and fight with us against Azerbaijan. In other words, they want to involve Russia in this. This is yet another provocation, and I am sure it will not succeed.

- When attacking Tovuz in July, could Armenia pursue any other goals? For example, to undermine energy security? The TANAP and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipelines are coming to mind.

- Yes, of course, this could have happened as well. There were several goals, because they had been saying before that if there were battles around Nagorno-Karabakh, they were ready to strike at our strategic infrastructure projects – the Sangachal oil and gas terminal and pipelines. Therefore, another goal of the attack on Tovuz District was to see how far they could go. Their main goal there was to cross the state border, occupy Azerbaijani lands, approach the TANAP pipeline or take control of it. But when this did not work, they retreated and asked for help from all mediators. I said that we had no targets in Armenian territory. Therefore, after four days, the attack stopped.

There may have been another reason. I have already spoken about this. Currently, Armenia is undergoing a deep crisis – both political and economic. As a result of the crisis, political ties within Armenia have been disrupted. Pashinyan's authorities are imprisoning the main opposition leaders today. For example, they have deprived the chairman of the main opposition party of parliamentary immunity and arrested him. Criminal proceedings have been instituted against the two previous presidents. There is no freedom of speech or freedom of assembly. They have taken down the Constitutional Court by force and brought their own people. Therefore, there are mounting concerns in Armenia. Pashinyan has orchestrated this attack in order to distract public opinion, involve Russia, destroy our strategic infrastructure, stabilize the situation in the country and occupy a part of Azerbaijani lands in order to then strengthen their position in the talks.

- Mr. President, let me ask you two more questions. In the regions where such conflicts, clashes and crises occur, there is always a smear campaign. What did you observe in this regard after Armenia launched its attacks? I would like to know your assessment.

- You know, the smear campaign against Azerbaijan does not stop for a minute or a second. There are several reasons for this. First, the Armenian lobby constantly acts against us. Attempts to slander Azerbaijan, tarnish us and sully our image never stop. There are Armenian lobbies in many countries of the world. This is no secret for anyone. They systematically and regularly attack us. They make up utter lies and slander. During this conflict, the Armenian lobby naturally mobilized all its forces and made efforts for a new smear campaign against us. But we are not worried about this. I told them to provide evidence, proof and facts. I also told the President of France – he called me twice – to provide facts. Eight days have passed since 27 September.

- What is Macron saying?

- Nothing, he says that they allegedly have intelligence. I asked him to share it with us. Where is this intelligence? It is not there and cannot be.

- What does your intelligence say in connection with Armenia?

- About what?

- Your intelligence materials dwell on external forces in Armenia – Lebanon, Syria...

- We do have such data, and they are justified. We are now verifying them. As a very responsible state, we do not mention that in our official statements. Of course, such information is available in the media, to politicians and political scientists. But we have to confirm this. From the very beginning, we had intelligence that terrorists had been brought to Nagorno-Karabakh. They are being stationed and trained here.

- What terrorist groups?

- Terrorist groups such as PKK. There was a lot of information about this. A few years ago, we raised this issue on international platforms. They are being trained and it is not ruled out that this is still the case. I will simply talk about it after I have 100-percent facts in my hands. Today the probability is very high. But unlike Armenia and some other countries, we do not provide information that has not been confirmed by 100 percent.

I can give you one more example. We were accused of the fact that Turkish fighter F-16 shot down Armenian Su-25. I said: provide evidence. We have information that these are fabrications of the smear campaign. Today they have got convinced that this is not true. But has anyone apologized to us? No! They began to slander us, tried to tarnish us, but then they saw that it was a lie. But you have to apologize.

- If I am not mistaken, the transfer of armed unmanned aerial vehicles to the Azerbaijani army has largely influenced the course of these events.

- Right. This has had a huge impact. Mashallah, these armed aircraft are of the highest level in the world, and the fact that they are deployed by the Azerbaijani Army has greatly strengthened our power. These vehicles have created ample opportunities for us and, at the same time, enabled us to avoid major human losses. Because if we had not had these capabilities, it would have been much more difficult to destroy the fortifications Armenia had built in Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied lands in 30 years, their tanks, cannons and multiple launch rocket systems. More people could have died. So this perfect and technologically intelligent product testifies to the potential of the Turkish people. We are a country with an ally such as Turkey. We are a very happy country because we have such an ally and brother as Turkey. Of course, the moral support provided to us by Turkey, as well as the products of the Turkish defense industry that we have, strengthen us, and the whole world can see that. The Turkish army is the second strongest army in NATO today. No-one can resist the Turkish army. Everyone can see and understand this. We are also building a small model of the Turkish army. Inshallah, we will build it together. No-one in the region can resist us either. Our cause and that of Turkey is a just cause. We are protecting ourselves and our citizens, we want to preserve our territorial integrity. We do not claim the lands of other countries. But what belongs to us must remain with us. For 30 years now, Armenians have been exploiting our ancient land, not allowing our people to return to these lands. International mediators remain indifferent and pay no heed. This being the case, Azerbaijan will do it itself.

- I have shared information about the injury of your Armenian citizen during the attack on Ganja. We had the opportunity to conduct round-the-clock observations at the frontline and the commanders reported that you were calling them.

- Yes, of course, this once again proves that Armenia is a terrorist country. Their actions are fundamentally contrary to the Geneva Convention. The shelling of civilians and cities is unacceptable. The city of Ganja is not a war zone. There are no guns or tanks in Ganja. Why are you firing at it? Out of hatred! Hatred of Azerbaijan and Turkey is in their blood. Unfortunately, the young generation of Armenia is also being raised in spirit of such hatred. But this cannot make us deviate from our path. You know, the city of Tartar is practically destroyed. Our citizens in Tartar stand bravely and courageously. They are saying that we will rather die than leave our lands. How many shells have fallen on the city? There was a day when 2,000 shells fell on Tartar alone. And this is a small town.

As for my calls to the commanders, they are restoring historical justice. They are risking their lives. They are heroes, they save, liberate and return our lands. The liberation of Madagiz from the occupation is of great strategic importance. The settlement is not very large, but its strategic importance is tremendous. It is very difficult to capture it. Any serviceman can confirm this. It is incredibly difficult. But they captured it, the flag of Azerbaijan was raised in Madagiz and on the same day its historical name was returned to the village – Sugovushan. This is our historical name.

The capture of the city of Jabrayil requires great heroism, because, let me say again, for the past 30 years, during the ceasefire, several rows of fortifications were built there, and quite formidable ones. In addition, the local terrain is a natural fortification in itself. Nagorno-Karabakh is located in the mountains. In other words, we are moving from bottom to top. Everyone understands how difficult it is. Therefore, Azerbaijani soldiers, Azerbaijani officers and generals are showing true heroism, courage, perseverance, and ensuring our territorial integrity at the cost of their lives. Inshallah, we will go forward to the end.

- After Karabakh and the occupied lands are returned to Azerbaijan, what will you say to the Armenians living there?

- I have already said my word. A few days ago, I visited our wounded soldiers, met with them in a military hospital. I expressed my gratitude to them and, during the meeting, I addressed the Armenian people. I understood that it is not so easy to say this in front of them because they were wounded by the Armenians. But I said that we have nothing against the Armenian people. The Armenian people must hold their government accountable. These battles were the result of the nefarious and dirty policies of their government. Our position remains unchanged. After the liberation of our lands and the end of the occupation, the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azerbaijanis who will return there will live together. As two communities on the territory of one country. Today there are thousands of Armenians living in Azerbaijan. You also noted that the citizen who was wounded as a result of the Armenian attack on Ganja is an Armenian by nationality. Armenians live here. Nobody touches them. They are our citizens. We have no problems with the Armenian people. They are a hostage of their government. Unfortunately, when Pashinyan came to power, he promised a lot. We also hoped that the old criminal regime was consigned to history. But instead, a new regime came and plunged its people into further suffering. This regime is killing our civilians and soldiers today. I am absolutely sure that the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples will make up. Today, Armenians and Azerbaijanis live together in many countries. In Georgia, there are about 300,000 Azerbaijanis and 200,000 Armenians. Sometimes they live in the same village. There are no problems between them. In Turkey, Russia – there are about 700,000 Azerbaijanis with Russian citizenship, and they live together. There are no problems. Why shouldn't they live here? We used to live together. I remember my late father and I visiting Nagorno-Karabakh, Shusha in 1982. The mausoleum of our great poet Vagif was opening. At the opening ceremony of the mausoleum, Armenian and Azerbaijani poets recited poems in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages. It was a celebration of friendship. I witnessed that picture. Armenians used to live in Baku. We didn't have any problems. We want to live together again. To live again as good neighbors with Armenia. The Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh are our citizens. We recognize them as such. I hope that after the end of this aggressive policy, our peoples will make up.

- Did your late father bequeath you anything in connection with Nagorno-Karabakh? If yes, what?

- My father's path is the guiding light for me. It is my duty as his son and as President to continue his policy. When I was elected president for the first time, at the inauguration ceremony, I said that I would follow the path of Heydar Aliyev, I would not deviate from this path, which is the only one for Azerbaijan. I am committed to this path in all areas, in the field of foreign policy, in the economic and social spheres, including the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Because he was also pressured. In his time, they also exerted pressure on him, demanded that independence be granted to Nagorno-Karabakh. They said that Nagorno-Karabakh had seceded from you, broke away from you. He endured and withstood this pressure. He did not sign a single document that would contradict the interests of the Azerbaijani people. Because he was the Leader of our people. There was never any hesitation in my position on the Karabakh issue either. Today I am saying what I said 17 years ago: Nagorno-Karabakh is our land, the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be ensured! I will never allow a second Armenian state to be created on historically Azerbaijani lands. We are using every opportunity to restore our territorial integrity. We are getting close to that.

- On behalf of one nation in two states, I express my deep gratitude to the President of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev. You received us in such a situation, during the war. We thank you as the Commander-in-Chief.

- I also thank you and I am glad that at the end of our conversation you recalled the famous saying of my father - these are the words of Heydar Aliyev, and one nation in two states is the guiding light for Turkey and Azerbaijan today. Turkey and Azerbaijan are one nation in two states.

- Thank you very much.

- Thank you.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Russian "Perviy Kanal" TV

06.10.2020 [10:11]

As previously reported, on 6 October President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by the Russian "Perviy Kanal" television.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

My name is Yevgeniy, I am a correspondent of "Perviy Kanal". Thank you very much!

President Ilham Aliyev: Very nice to meet you. Thank you!

-Ilham Heydar oglu, you have repeatedly stated that the goal of the current offensive operation is the return of Karabakh. "Karabakh is our land and we will return there" – these are your words. Quite an unequivocal position. But the position of the opposite side is no less unambiguous – "We will not give up an inch of land". This, as it turns out, is a road to nowhere. In your opinion, what should happen for Azerbaijan and Armenia to sit down at the negotiating table?

-First of all, four resolutions of the UN Security Council, which were adopted in 1993, at a time when the Armenian occupying forces were seizing the territories of Azerbaijan, must be implemented. These resolutions send a very clear signal to the aggressor. They state that an immediate, unconditional and full return of the occupied territories must be ensured. Twenty-seven years have passed since then. The Armenian side does not comply with these resolutions, ignores them and tries in every possible way to freeze the conflict as much and as far as possible. All calls from the international community, including the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries, that the status quo is unacceptable and must be changed, remain in the air. Therefore, our position is based on the norms and principles of international law and on historical justice. Meanwhile, the Armenian position is based on historical lies and violation of the norms and principles of international law. As soon as the resolutions of the UN Security Council are implemented by Armenia, as soon as Armenia agrees to the withdrawal of its troops from the occupied territories, I am sure that both sides can come to an agreement that will establish peace in the Caucasus in a short time.

-Fighting has been going on for more than a week now and, judging by the video footage circulated by both sides, it is clear that the fighting is quite intense and involves heavy losses. Can you cite these figures from the Azerbaijani side?

-On our side, as a result of shelling from Armenia and from Nagorno-Karabakh, 27 civilians have been killed and more than 170 civilians have received wounds of varying degree of severity. More than 800 houses have been destroyed. The current escalation of the confrontation began on 27 September, when shelling of Azerbaijani settlements, as well as our combat positions, began from the occupied territories, as a result of which civilians and servicemen were killed in the very first minutes of this attack. We were forced to take adequate action and quickly launched a counteroffensive. As a result of this counteroffensive, we suppressed a large number of firing points and combat positions of the opposing side and liberated a part of the occupied territories in the northern and southern directions. Therefore, many settlements of Azerbaijan, citizens living there, can already live normally there because they are beyond the reach of Armenian artillery. In recent days, however, the shelling of the territory of Azerbaijan is carried out by long-range artillery from the territory of Armenia, using such deadly systems as "Point U" and "Elbrus", which represents a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention, a crime, a war crime. The shelling of the town of Tartar, which is located in the immediate vicinity of the conflict zone, continues this morning too. The population of Ganja, the second largest city of Azerbaijan, was also shelled. One missile hit the territory of our largest power plant in Mingachevir. More than 10 of our cities and hundreds of villages are subjected to massive artillery bombardment. This is an old tactic of the Armenian side. Every time they suffer defeats on the battlefield, they resort to such ignoble actions, trying to harm the civilian population and thus attempting to stop the counteroffensive of the Azerbaijani army. But they are not succeeding and will not succeed.

-Is it possible to talk about military losses?

-Military losses. To date, the information related to this is confidential. The Azerbaijani public will be informed about this after the end of the active phase of hostilities.

-You are calling on Turkey to participate in the settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. What exactly, in your opinion, should this participation consist in? Should there be a military or political effort?

-I said this yesterday, proceeding from the fact that Armenia's aggressive actions continue, proceeding from the fact that Armenia is trying in every possible way to involve as many countries as possible in this conflict. I spoke in an interview about the inadmissibility of such a policy. The conflict should not go beyond the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan. In fact, the conflict does not even enter the territory of Armenia. Despite the shelling from the Armenian territory, we do not strike any strikes on the territory of Armenia, we do not go into the territory of Armenia although there are all the possibilities to do that. The Armenian side is trying to drag the CSTO into this confrontation, but to no avail. It is trying to involve European countries. In essence, it is trying to internationalize this conflict, and we, accordingly, present our position on the inadmissibility of such an approach. Regarding my statement about Turkey's involvement. I meant, of course, only a political settlement, a post-conflict settlement. At the moment, Turkey is not in any way involved in the conflict, despite all rumors and insinuations in this regard. This is not supported by any facts – for example about the Turkish F-16 fighter shooting down an Armenian SU-25. This news circulated both in Russian and European media. There is no evidence. It turned out that the Armenian pilot, apparently due to a lack of professional training, crashed into the mountain. Such fake news are often thrown into circulation. I don't know for what purpose. I can only guess. But they have no foundation whatsoever. So, when the phase of the military confrontation ends, we will, of course, return to the negotiating table. By the way, from the very beginning of the hostilities, Azerbaijan said that we are not leaving the process of negotiations, we are counting on a political settlement, but there must be a settlement. We cannot sit and wait for another 30 years for pressure to be put on Armenia. Of course, Turkey, as a great country, as our neighbor and neighbor in the South Caucasus, has every right to take part in the mediation mission that will be carried out after the end of hostilities. Given that the current mediation mission has not led to any results for 28 years but led to inaction, to what we are seeing now, we must, of course, proceed from a pragmatic approach – who can really have a positive impact on events in the region, reduce escalation, establish a lasting peace and develop cooperation. Of course, first of all, I think, these are Turkey and Russia.

-You mentioned European countries. You responded quite harshly to the President of France and called on him to apologize for the words about the mercenaries who are fighting on the side of the Azerbaijani army. Can you confirm once again today that the mercenaries do not participate in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh on the side of Azerbaijan?

-I have been talking about this all these days. I am surprised with such media speculation, and in my telephone conversations with the President of France I defended our position with sufficient reasoning. First, I asked for evidence, and if there is no evidence, then he should apologize to the Azerbaijani people. Secondly, I said we do not need mercenaries. Today Azerbaijan has a powerful army. According to all international ratings, it is among top 50 most powerful armies in the world. We have 100,000 fighters under arms, not counting the reservists and not counting other paramilitary formations ready for battle. Today the Azerbaijani army is liberating our territories. Videos from the scene of hostilities show our artillery and drones in action, they should, Azerbaijani soldiers and officers planting flags in the lands already liberated from occupation. Therefore, these accusations are unfounded, we resolutely reject them and cannot allow such rumors and unverified data to somehow manipulate public opinion. Let them provide evidence. We are in the tenth day of hostilities, but no evidence has been presented to us.

-If we assume that the hostilities are over and Azerbaijan has achieved its goals, what is the future for Karabakh given the number of Armenians living there? What will happen to them?

-I have also repeatedly spoken on this topic before and during the escalation. As recently as yesterday, in an interview with a Turkish TV channel, I said that we consider the Armenians living in the territory of Karabakh our citizens. And we believe that after the settlement of the conflict, after the end of the occupation, the Armenian and Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh should live together, as has been the case for many years. When the conflict began in the late 1980s, 75 percent of the population in Nagorno-Karabakh was Armenian and 25 percent Azerbaijani. The city of Shusha, where they held the so-called "inauguration" of the leader of the criminal regime and insulted the Azerbaijani people, consisted of the Azerbaijani population by 98 percent. The city of Shusha was founded by the Azerbaijani Panahali Khan. This is an ancient Azerbaijani city from which all Azerbaijanis were expelled. So after the end of the conflict, after a peaceful settlement, which, by the way, is reflected in the fundamental principles, the so-called Madrid principles, the Azerbaijani population should return to the occupied territories. It is explicitly stated that all displaced persons have the right to return to their places of residence. Thus, after a peace

agreement is reached, and I hope that this will happen, the Azerbaijani will return to Nagorno-Karabakh and will live where they used to live. My position has always been that we must return to the atmosphere that existed before the start of the conflict in the late 1980s. I think it is possible. It will not be easy after what the Armenian executioners did in Khojaly, having exterminated the civilian population, destroyed our historical and religious sites and erased the historical heritage of Azerbaijanis from these territories. It will not be easy. But I believe that we should strive for this. And my appeal to the people of Armenia and to those who live in Nagorno-Karabakh now was repeatedly expressed during the hostilities. I called on the Armenian people to reason their government. I called on Armenian mothers not to send their children to the occupied territories. It is probably no secret for anyone that the so-called army of Nagorno-Karabakh does not exist. What is called the army of Nagorno-Karabakh consists by 90 percent of the citizens of Armenia. I made these calls. I have not heard such calls from the Armenian side these days – apart from hatred, apart from aggression, apart from threats and apart from completely inappropriate actions. Our position is that we are in favor of a peaceful settlement of the conflict. I am confident that if there is political will on the part of Armenia, we will be able to achieve this.

Ilham Heydar oglu, sooner or later, all wars end in peace. How do you imagine this moment?

- You know, it is difficult to talk about this because our people have experienced so much grief, so much suffering has been inflicted on them by Armenian occupiers that it is very difficult to imagine this moment now as a holistic picture. We have not had peace for over 30 years. What we had over the past more than two decades has been a truce. But everyone understood that it was unstable, it was not durable. Therefore, the co-chairs of the Minsk Group represented by the presidents of Russia, the United States and France made statements several years ago, there was more than one statement of this kind, that the status quo is unacceptable and that it must be changed. They perfectly understood and understand that this truce is very fragile and unstable. Today's escalation confirms this once again. Therefore, if we talk about peace, first of all, I see it as a political settlement that would be comprehensive, that would be long-term, that would be eternal with serious guarantees from leading countries of the world, countries that would be acceptable to both Azerbaijan and Armenia. I do not exclude that the composition of these countries may be different from the composition of the Minsk Group and its co-chairs today. Because the Minsk Group was set up in 1992, in completely different geopolitical realities, just after the collapse of the USSR and, to be honest, I don't quite understand the basis on which this group was established. Because there must be some principle on which this or that association or temporary format is created. Therefore, I think that, returning to what we talked about earlier, the active participation of regional powers, guarantees of international organizations and, of course, the return of Azerbaijanis to the lands that rightfully belong to them.

-A clarifying question. What configuration can that be, in your opinion?

- It is probably premature to talk about it. I think I am slightly jumping the gun already. I just want our neighbors and partners to know my position. I think that regional cooperation has already proved its worth in many areas. If we pay attention to recent years, we can see that Azerbaijan, together with its neighbors, has worked very hard to create a strong regional cooperation format – political, economic, transport, energy and any other. Suffice it to look at the achievements we have made after many years by signing the Convention on the Settlement of the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea. Almost from the very beginning of their independence, some of the five Caspian littoral countries could not agree but then, showing good will, we came to agreement and saw the advantages. Today, cooperation between such a great power as Russia and such a great power as Turkey, a NATO member, is much more sincere, durable and effective than cooperation of NATO member Turkey with, say, another NATO country that constantly accuses Turkey of something. These are new geopolitical realities. This was not the case in 1992. The world has changed. It is changing right before our eyes. And we must proceed from this, not from any dogmas, not from any assumptions or established opinions that this or that country has a potential for a solution. Today, when the conflict has entered an active phase and when the Armenian prime minister, as I can see, is annoying world leaders with his phone calls, it is clear who has the potential for settlement. These are the countries that have the potential for a settlement, the countries Azerbaijan respects for dignity, justice and sincerity. They should be the guarantors of long-term peace.

-Thank you very much for the detailed answers and for the interview.

-Thank you!

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by CNN-Türk TV

07.10.2020 [18:46]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by CNN-Türk television. AZERTAC presents the interview.

Mr. President Ilham Aliyev, welcome to CNN-Türk. Thank you for giving this interview on such historic days for Azerbaijan. Without further ado, let me immediately move on to the questions. First of all, what is the latest situation in the operations? Are they going as planned? What territory has been liberated from occupation?

-Everything is going according to plan. The Azerbaijani army is restoring the territorial integrity of the country these days. The operation continues successfully. One city and many villages have already been liberated from the occupation. This once again proves that the Azerbaijani people will never put up with the occupation. We have repeatedly said this: Karabakh is our historical and ancestral land! Unfortunately, the negotiations held for a long time did not lead to any results. Therefore, of course, Azerbaijan had to restore its territorial integrity on its own and is doing exactly that.

As you know, on 27 September the Armenian armed forces launched a new offensive against us. Many of our cities and villages are being shelled. Today the death toll among our civilians is about 30 people. The Armenian armed forces are shelling our cities and villages, about a thousand houses have been destroyed or seriously damaged. But everything is going according to plan, and I hope that the tasks before us will be fulfilled.

-Mr. President, I would like to return to the processes in the zone of operations again. As we know, the Armenian army began shelling Azerbaijani cities outside the conflict zone with ballistic missiles. In particular, it is targeting settlements in the second largest city of Azerbaijan, Ganja, a power plant in Mingachevir with ballistic missiles. What do you think was the goal?

-In my opinion, this is a sign of helplessness of the Armenian army and the crimes of the military-political leadership of Armenia because violence against civilians, the shelling of settlements and the destruction of peaceful cities with ballistic missiles is considered a war crime. This indicates that Armenia cannot resist us on the battlefield. Losing the battle and in an effort to stop us, and in order to harm the civilian population as much as possible, it resorts to such heinous acts. As you noted, Ganja and Mingachevir are cities that are far from the war zone. At the same time, our cities located near the front zone are bombarded every day. The nearest district is Tartar. From one to two thousand shells are dropped on the city of Tartar every day. The main purpose of this is violence against civilians. This once again demonstrates the fascist essence of Armenia, the fascist essence of its regime. But this does not frighten the Azerbaijani people and has no impact whatsoever. Our citizens living in these regions, in these cities and villages stand firmly. They say: long live the Motherland, may our lands be liberated from occupation as soon as possible. They will remain in these places to the end and will provide our army with moral support.

-If Armenia continues shelling civilian settlements, will there be any change in your current position?

-No, there should be no change in our position. We are not fighting against the Armenian people. I have already spoken about this many times. We are waging a fair fight. We want to restore our territorial integrity, we are doing this and we have achieved success in this matter and in this direction. Azerbaijan has never fought against the civilian population and against civilians. The other day I said that we have no problems with the Armenian people. Thousands of Armenians live in Azerbaijan, and they are our citizens. The Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh today are also our citizens. All our goals are military. We have every right to destroy military targets because they have caused great damage to our army and cities. Therefore, our duty is to destroy them and ensure the safety of our population.

-Armenia's bombardment of civilian settlements with ballistic missiles is essentially a war crime, an act contrary to the Geneva Convention. In this context, do you plan to put forward any initiatives regarding war crimes before the UN? Do you collect evidence of these crimes on the ground?

-We certainly do. All of their war crimes are already being recorded. Unfortunately, the international community did not react to the war crimes that were committed against Azerbaijan and our people earlier. The Khojaly massacre is an act of genocide that took place in front of the whole world. However, the then

military-political leadership of Armenia was not held accountable for this. The destruction of our cities and villages, the appearance of more than a million internally displaced persons – the international community did not take any action in this regard. Therefore, this issue has not been resolved for many years because no distinction is made between the occupier and the victim of the occupation. And the shelling of our cities and villages by the Armenian armed forces with ballistic missiles today is a war crime. The leadership of Armenia, of course, must and will bear responsibility for this.

-So far you have received several calls for a ceasefire. You have personally answered them. But looking at the 30-year history of the conflict, do you think that these calls will produce results?

-I believe that these calls should not be just calls for a ceasefire. We have repeatedly said that sanctions should have been applied to the occupying state of Armenia. If sanctions had been applied in due time, then, perhaps, this issue would have been resolved long ago. Very serious pressure should have been put on Armenia – not in word but in deed. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Therefore, this process dragged on for 30 years. Negotiations that have been fruitless for 30 years are already losing their point. In addition, recently, the military-political leadership of Armenia, both with aggressive actions and aggressive statements, disrupted the process of negotiations. In other words, it dealt a crushing blow to the talks. To say that “Karabakh is Armenia” essentially means an end to the negotiations because the essence of the negotiations is that the occupied lands should be gradually and on a step-by-step basis returned to Azerbaijan. This is enshrined in the fundamental principles. To say that “Karabakh is Armenia” actually means an end to this process. There were other similar statements. After that, in July, Armenia attacked Azerbaijan in the direction of the state border, killing many soldiers and one civilian. Therefore, the restoration of the ceasefire must be ensured on certain conditions. First of all, we should be given a schedule for the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied lands. We have already communicated our position on this issue to the Minsk Group. I hope that our calls and proposals will not remain unanswered.

-I think that speaking about the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, France should be mentioned separately. What can you say in connection with France's position on this issue?

-I have already spoken about this several times. We have always perceived the Minsk Group as a group, and this is still the case today. We believed that the co-chair countries of this group should remain neutral, not support any of the parties, because otherwise their mediation mission would be called into question. Until recent events, they managed to maintain neutrality to a certain extent. We know that the Armenian lobby is strong in these countries. It can and does influence the governments of these countries. We see today that the Armenians living in various countries are conducting an organized black propaganda campaign against Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, some countries have recently demonstrated a lop-sided position. There were cases of support for one of the parties. This is unacceptable. We have expressed our position on this matter. If mediators want to remain mediators and continue to deal with this issue, then they should be more responsible and not take sides. They should try to take actions intended to resolve this issue so that the conflict is resolved as soon as possible, so that the ceasefire can then be restored and a lasting peace can be established.

-Why did you say that French President Emmanuel Macron should apologize?

-You also know that there have been accusations against us. Official statements said that Azerbaijan and Turkey had allegedly transferred members of terrorist groups to the region even though there is no evidence of that. Ten days have passed since those statements. So far, we have not been presented with any evidence. This is injustice to us. These statements were made on the basis of false information. This was said either on the basis of unverified and unconfirmed information or on purpose. It is hard to say. In any case, each country must defend itself. Naturally, we are responding to injustice against us. We cannot but react to this. There was another statement – “Azerbaijan wants to conquer Nagorno-Karabakh”. This statement is also completely contrary to international laws because Nagorno-Karabakh is our land. How can a country conquer its own land? Such statements completely contradict the mandate of the Minsk Group. We just want the internally displaced persons who have been expelled from their native lands for about 30 years to return to their homes so that the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is ensured. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is as important as the territorial integrity of other countries.

-Speaking of black propaganda, since the start of the counter-offensive, a black propaganda campaign against Azerbaijan has been carried out on social media. What can you say about this? What facts do you have in this regard?

- You know, black propaganda against us has been going on for many years. There are several reasons for this. One of them is that Azerbaijan is pursuing an independent policy on a global scale. The interests of the Azerbaijani people are at the center of our policy. We have not been, do not want to be and will not become an instrument in the hands of other countries. The development of today's Azerbaijan, the development achieved in all directions testifies that Azerbaijan is on the right path. Look at the successes we have achieved in international relations. Azerbaijan is recognized as a responsible and reliable country on a global scale now. We currently chair the second-largest international organization after the United Nations – the Non-Aligned Movement. We were able to achieve this with the support of 120 countries. Today Azerbaijan is a political, geographic and energy bridge between Europe and Asia. In other words, we have achieved all these successes also thanks to an independent policy. Some countries did not like this, some countries tried to look down on Azerbaijan but our resolute position did not allow them to do this. Therefore, one of the reasons for the pressure exerted on us is precisely the fact that we are pursuing an independent policy, we are going our own way, we are not acting on anyone's order and we are not bowing to anyone. There are other reasons as well. This is a long story, it may well be the topic of a separate interview. As soon as these events occurred, those who regularly conducted black propaganda against us, non-governmental organizations, circles, media representatives of some countries immediately took action to tarnish the image of Azerbaijan, slander us, invent utter lies about us in order to form a false opinion and a wrong idea about this conflict.

Of course, by fighting against these accusations on our own, we have achieved some success. But our possibilities are also limited. Our voice often falls on deaf ears. We are not provided with an international platform. International media structures are more on the side of Armenia and spread false information about the conflict. Therefore, taking this opportunity, I want to thank the representatives of the media of brotherly Turkey for the fact that these days they are communicating the truth about this war to the whole world, transmitting information live – the destroyed cities, dropped missiles, the city of Ganja, the city of Mingachevir, the city of Tartar. In other words, this information, transmitted mostly by Turkish media, serves to form a fair opinion about the conflict.

-Mr. President, a few days before the start of the operation, you made an appeal to the leaders attending the UN General Assembly in New York, the United States. You appealed to the whole world. In your speech, you said that some terrorist groups were being sent to Armenia, and you drew attention to this issue. You emphasized, in particular, the need to pay attention to this issue. Three days after this statement, Armenia launched an offensive against Azerbaijan. What intelligence does Azerbaijan have on this issue today?

-In that speech, I also said that Armenia is preparing for a new war, we have information about this and Armenia must be stopped. As for the existence of camps of terrorist organizations in Armenia, we had these data before.

-What are these terrorist groups?

-First of all, there were camps of PKK terrorist groups in the Azerbaijani lands occupied by Armenia. We have new intelligence information – some of it has already been published in the media. There are already documents and audio information about their negotiations and contacts. This question did not raise any doubts in us because Armenia is a terrorist country. During the first Karabakh war, dozens of terrorist acts were committed against us – in the metro, buses, ships. I believe that the world should recognize the Armenian terror as a disgusting fact known in the world. The man who committed the terrorist act in the French airport in the 1980s was subsequently handed over to Armenia, then released and declared a hero. Therefore, terrorists from various countries flock to Armenia these days. According to our information, Armenians and representatives of other nationalities from the Middle East flock to Armenia to participate in the unjust war against Azerbaijan.

-I would like to return to the topic of the OSCE Minsk Group. Russia is one of its co-chairs. What are your expectations from Russia in the region?

-Russia as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group also carries out a mediation mission, of course. We have no problem with this. At the same time, Russia is the only country among the three co-chair countries that is our neighbor. Naturally, we have long-term historical relations with Russia. At present, Russia is

developing ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is a very important fact. Therefore, there are no problems either in the bilateral format or within the Minsk Group. During these events, Russia's position has been responsible.

-Mr. President, what is Iran's position on this issue?

-Iranian officials have supported Azerbaijan's just cause. A few days ago, Iranian officials said that the occupation must be stopped, the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be restored and our IDPs must return to their native lands. This is a fair position.

-Have you had any contact with US President Donald Trump in this process? Do you consider the presence of the United States in it important?

-America is also a co-chair of the Minsk Group. Together with two other co-chairs, they participate in these affairs. I had no contact with the President of America. However, high-ranking US officials have naturally expressed their opinion on this issue and in connection with these events. At the same time, the distinguished Donald Trump also made a statement on this matter. I believe that his statement was complete and logical. Our bilateral ties with America are developing successfully. In many areas, we act as partners. Naturally, America as a superpower expresses its position on this issue. We are satisfied with their position as well.

-In July, Armenia attacked the city of Tovuz. Now, in the course of this operation, it strikes at civilian sites and settlements again. You have already said that Armenia is doing this in order to drag Azerbaijan into a provocation. Apart from being drawn into a provocation, does the shelling of these settlements, in particular the city of Tovuz, the Mingachevir power plant and other similar targets, pose a threat to energy security in the region? Can this be viewed as a transformation of energy infrastructure into a target? In particular, I mean the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the TANAP project. What is your take on that?

-This, of course, is also one of Armenia's goals. They did not even conceal this, and the statements of the Armenian leadership before these events indicated that they intended to strike at our strategic energy infrastructure – pipelines, as well as the Sangachal oil and gas terminal, one of the largest oil and gas terminals in the world. In fact, one of the reasons for the Tovuz events was precisely this – to occupy new Azerbaijani lands, then strengthen their positions at the negotiating table and, at the same time, either approach our strategic energy communications or take them under control and then dictate their will to us. This is always part of the plans of the Armenian state. They don't conceal that. The strike on the Mingachevir power plant is also an integral part of this plan because it is the largest plant not only in Azerbaijan but also throughout the entire South Caucasus. Even though we have built many stations in recent years, the Mingachevir station today is our largest station providing electricity to a significant part of the country. If it failed, then certain problems could have arisen in relation to energy issues, of course. Today Azerbaijan exports crude oil, natural gas and electricity. We export our surplus electricity. These actions were aimed at our economic potential and once again showed the whole world the criminal essence of Armenia and the Armenian regime.

-Mr. Aliyev, how big is the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh?

-Today there is not a single Azerbaijani in Nagorno-Karabakh. They have all been expelled from there. The entire Azerbaijani population was expelled both from the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and from seven districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh – in Soviet times, Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous region. In Soviet times, in the late 1980s, Azerbaijanis constituted 25 percent of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijanis accounted for 98 percent of the population of the city of Shusha. Shusha is our ancient historical city. At the first stage, all Azerbaijanis were expelled from Shusha, then from Khankandi, other cities and villages, and after that from seven districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh. Today, there is no Azerbaijani population in Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent occupied districts. We will now go back there. We already started going back four years ago. But after the end of this confrontation, we will, of course, return to these regions.

-You said that Azerbaijanis were expelled from the occupied Karabakh lands. But at present, a large Armenian population also lives in other Azerbaijani lands. What can you say in this regard?

-This is natural because there are representatives of many nationalities living in Azerbaijan. They live like one family. Azerbaijan is known as a multicultural country worldwide. This is acknowledged by the United Nations, as well as other international organizations operating in the humanitarian field. Azerbaijan is the land of tolerance, ethnic and religious tolerance. Thousands of Armenians live in our

country today and they are our citizens. They also live normally, like all other nationalities. Of course, I am sure that after the end of this war and conflict, the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh today will live with us. Azerbaijan is a multinational country. This has been the case throughout history. I think this is our great advantage.

Representatives of other nationalities do not live in Armenia. Armenia is one of a handful of countries in the world where 99 percent of the population is Armenian. All other nationalities were expelled from there. First of all, the Azerbaijanis were expelled, then the rest. Armenia is a mono-ethnic state, and this once again proves that it is a racist country. Representatives of no other nationality can live there. They are either unable to withstand the torment and leave or they are expelled by force.

-Dear President, I have a few more questions left, let me ask them. If we come back to the topic related to the theater of operations, has there been a difference after the inclusion of unmanned aerial vehicles and armed unmanned aerial vehicles in the arsenal of the Azerbaijani army?

-There is a big difference. Armed unmanned aerial vehicles made in Turkey are a type of weapon created on the basis of the latest and modern technologies, only a few countries in the world have such capabilities. This is a manifestation of the technological, economic and intellectual potential of Turkey. Of course, the possession of such opportunities facilitates our work and saves the lives of our citizens, soldiers, because without them we would have to strike at tanks, cannons and other Armenian equipment from the ground. And this could lead to great human losses. These vehicles give us a great advantage in keeping human losses low. At the same time, they are technologically advanced.

-By the way, speaking of air defense systems, the Armenian side has, in particular, such modern air defense systems as S-300 which it had acquired from Russia. The Azerbaijani army also has defense systems, but not these weapons. Do you think this creates a double standard?

-No, we have anti-aircraft guns for S-300 which we bought from Russia. We have purchased a large amount of weapons from Russia. There are no restrictions in that area. Therefore, I cannot speak of double standards. The only difference is that we buy them and they are very expensive systems. Armenia often receives them free of charge – either as a gift or as a loan. But this loan remains on paper and is never repaid. Naturally, if this expensive armament had not been provided to Armenia free of charge, then Armenia's possession of it could not even be a subject of discussion and the conflict would have been settled long ago. The free armament has instilled confidence in them that they would be able to hold these lands under occupation forever. The difference is this. We have the opportunity to acquire weapons from Russia. We buy weapons from other countries as well. There are no restrictions on this issue. There are some countries that have imposed an embargo on the sale of weapons to us but this does not create any particular problems for us because the arms market is now more diversified and its geography is expanding. I recently said that the Turkish defense industry is developing so rapidly today that, I hope our equipment with Turkish weapons will rise to an even higher level in the future.

-I would like to touch upon the issue that has drawn our attention here. Wherever we were, in Baku or cities in the conflict zone, in Tartar, we saw the flags of Turkey everywhere next to the flags of Azerbaijan. What would you like to say about this?

-In fact, it has always been this way, because Turkey is not only an ally and the closest country for us. Turkey is a fraternal country for us, just like Azerbaijan is for Turkey. The flag of Turkey is a native flag for us, as native as the flag of Azerbaijan. But, of course, this conflict, the clear position of Turkey during these battles, the statements of Mr. President, my brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the support provided to Azerbaijan, the words that "Azerbaijan is not alone" in people's letters coming from Turkey have, of course, further increased the love of Turkey. You are also witnessing that the flags of Turkey and Azerbaijan are waving together in all our regions. At the same time, the flags of Turkey and Azerbaijan are waving together in Turkey today. The video footage shown to me is also very touching and we are glad that our Turkish brothers there decorate cars and buildings with the flags of Turkey and Azerbaijan. In other words, it is a symbol of true brotherhood and solidarity. There is no other country that would support Azerbaijan like Turkey. There is no country in the world that would support Turkey the way Azerbaijan does. This is our great asset.

-My last question, dear President. If the prime minister of Armenia Pashinyan were in front of you instead of me now, what would you tell him?

-Basically I have nothing to say to him. We have met many times. Two years ago, in our first contacts after he came to power, I think we had a very good conversation. I had hopes that he, as the new prime

minister, would introduce amendments and changes to Armenia's aggressive policy and understand that as long as this conflict remains unresolved, peace will not come to this region. As a person who came to power as a result of a coup and made big promises, he will not be able to fulfill them because if the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia are not normalized. And then there is no need to talk about the economic development of Armenia. I was hoping that he understood this and the first messages from Armenia were very positive. We showed restraint, taking into account their request, and strengthened the ceasefire. It is possible to say that the ceasefire was rigorously observed in the last two years. The Minsk Group co-chairs also noted this in their statements. But what happened next? We realized that he deceived us. I think that this is a very wrong path in politics. You can't lie. Our words do not differ from our deeds. But the words given to us turned out to be a lie. His words that "Karabakh is Armenia, full stop" actually put an end to the negotiations. After that, there were other provocative statements, including such that Azerbaijan should negotiate with Nagorno-Karabakh, i.e. the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic". This was a blow to the format of the negotiations. Not only we but also the Minsk Group opposed this. Then in July, they carried out a military provocation in Tovuz, in August they sent a sabotage group and last month they already carried out a large-scale offensive. Therefore, I have said everything to him. Addressing the Armenian people, I want to say that they should hold their government accountable, demand that it stop the fire, end the occupation, not send their children to war, do not send them to Azerbaijan because the so-called "army of the Nagorno-Karabakh republic" consists of citizens of Armenia by 90 percent. In other words, there is no such thing as the "army of Nagorno-Karabakh". Why should a person born in Armenia fight against us on Azerbaijani soil? Therefore, I want to tell the Armenian people that the Armenians live in peace today and will continue to live in Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani state is doing everything possible for their normal life. I want to tell the Armenian leadership: the sooner you leave the occupied lands, the better it will be for you.

-Dear President, on these historic days when the fighting continues, you have expressed very important thoughts. Once again, on behalf of the CNN Türk TV channel, I express my deep gratitude to you.

-I also thank you and CNN Türk TV channel, which broadcasts wonderful reports every day. Interesting live discussions with renowned people are organized in your studios. I express my gratitude to your channel for the unequivocal support of Azerbaijan. Let me also thank all representatives of the Turkish media for being with us on these difficult days.

-Thank you very much, thank you again!

Thank you!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Euronews TV

07.10.2020 [22:59]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by Euronews television. AZERTAC presents the interview.

-Joining us now is the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. Thank you for your time. There has been strong and repeated international pressure for a ceasefire and to de-escalate tensions. Fighting is ongoing, if not escalating. What is your objective now in the conflict?

-Ceasefire cannot be achieved unilaterally. It must be a bilateral decision and also it must be implemented on the ground. As you know Armenia attacked us on the 27th of September, attacking our military positions and damaging our infrastructure, attacking civilians. So far we have almost 30 civilians killed as a result of Armenian attack, including the ballistic missiles, and the cluster bombs. So, our counter-attack was successful. We managed to liberate part of the occupied territories and our main objective is restoration of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Armenia must give us the time-table for withdrawal of their troops from the occupied territories and this time-table must be approved by the Minsk group co-chairs, the countries which are mediators. And after that I think the effort must be imposed on achieving the ceasefire.

-The countries that you're referencing have repeatedly asked for a ceasefire. Why isn't that happening now? Why aren't you pushing for that to happen immediately?

-Because we have been a subject of attack for many times. During the last three months there have been three attacks on Azerbaijan. One in July, on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, far away from the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The goal of Armenia was to occupy new territories of Azerbaijan. They did not manage to do it. Our army defeated them. Then, on August 23, they send a sabotage group to commit terror acts against our civilians and military personnel. That also was a failure for them, because the head of the sabotage group was detained and he gives evidences exactly about what I am saying. And in the end of September they launched a massive attack on our villages and cities. I can tell you that up to today we have almost 900 houses totally demolished, or damaged and many casualties and wounded people among civilians. And now after Armenia is suffering a very bitter defeat, they are pleading for a ceasefire. They made violation of ceasefire themselves. They ignore United Nations Security Council resolutions which demand full, complete, immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops. They want to keep status quo unchanged, and the Minsk Group co-chairs United States, Russia and France, their presidents many times made the statements that the status quo is unacceptable. Armenia ignored it, but now Azerbaijan itself is changing the status quo, and I think that will be an important step towards the soonest resolution of the conflict.

-Mr. President, civilians have been killed on both sides of this conflict. How do you reconcile that with your aims?

-Of course, we regret that civilians are being killed and of course, we were not the purpose, we were not the source of this attack. Because it was a first thing in the morning on the 27th of September, what they did, they attacked our cities and villages. And we had to respond. But our response mainly is and primarily is on their military positions, on their tanks and guns and what we are doing on the battlefield is available in internet. Our drones and our other equipment demolished only military objectives on the occupied territories. Unfortunately, Armenia is using civilians in order to have more people on the ground, because their demographic situation is very bad, and we have video about these civilians being just next to the guns, and of course...

-I'm sorry to interject Mr. President, that civilians on their side have been killed in this fighting and they would dispute exactly why it was on the 27th of September this violence flared up again. Let me bring you to a promise that your foreign minister made last year that said it was necessary to take concrete measures to prepare the populations for peace. What we are seeing right now is the opposite of that. How are you trying to limit the suffering of civilians?

-You know we are not responsible for this outbreak. As I said, we were a subject of a physical attack from Armenian army which is situated on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Above from that, the current Armenian regime did everything in order to destroy the negotiation process. Exactly one year ago, Armenian prime Minister at the rally in the occupied area of Azerbaijan made a statement that 'Karabakh is Armenia' and that statement actually destroyed negotiation process. Because the principles which are on

the table and which are the basis for settlement demand the return of the occupied territories to Azerbaijan. And when Armenian prime minister says that not a centimeter of land will return to Azerbaijan, when he says that ‘Karabakh is Armenia’, when they organize illegal settlement of foreign people on the occupied territories which is a brutal violation of Geneva Convention, they destroy negotiation process. After that, in order to make us responsible for that, they attack us three times-on July, August, and September. When we beat them on the battlefield, they call everywhere, they make a plea to everyone, ‘stop Azerbaijan’. We want to stop, but we want the occupation to stop. Therefore, the main message should be to Armenia, we are not on Armenian land, we are on our land. Our land for 27 years...

-One thing that Armenia will say is that Turkey is really providing quite a strong influence, including supplying things like military aid. To what extent would you say Turkey are accelerating and pushing your country and your actions in this conflict?

-This is absolutely false information. Turkey for us is a strong ally, partner and brotherly country, and of course the statements expressed their position and we are very grateful to Turkish government, to Turkish President, Turkish people for this support. But Turkey in no other way is involved in this conflict. Armenia bringing such fake news to the media wants to diminish the capacity of Azerbaijani army. We are fighting ourselves. Yes, we purchased weapons from Turkey, but not only. Our main supplier of weapons is not Turkey. And probably everybody knows about that. So, the fact that we buy modern Turkish equipment including the fighter drones should not be a problem for anyone. Because Armenia gets weapons free of charge. We pay for them and Armenia gets free of charge. Turkey in no other way is involved in the conflict.

-We keep talking about weapons and we keep talking about fighting here. Is diplomacy still an option? Will you sit down, have talks with the prime minister of Armenia to find a different way out of this conflict?

I can tell you, that during my term as the president, I had maybe tens of talks with two former Armenian presidents and the current prime minister. During those previous debates we made a substantial progress on negotiation table. We elaborated the principles which today are the basis for the settlement of conflict. And we were constructive. Negotiations are taking place since 1992. Can you imagine? For almost 30 years. And we were living with hopes, mediators were telling us that you should wait a little bit, there will be more constructive approach from Armenian side. But when this prime minister came to power, as a result of the coup d'état two years ago, he destroyed completely negotiation process. And I had meetings with him many times. But these meetings were absolutely senseless. And he told me that they are not going to give the territories back, they told me that Nagorno-Karabakh must be, how to say, adjusted to Armenia. So this is absolutely unacceptable demand on me, and also unacceptable for mediators. Armenian government should change their position, should refrain from maximalist position, should stop telling that Karabakh is Armenia because this is not true and this is destroying negotiations process and of course, we are going back. By the way, tomorrow, our foreign minister will be in Geneva, meeting with the ambassadors of the Minsk Group. And as far as I know, Armenian foreign minister was supposed to go there in the beginning of the month, but he ignored that. He is not there. Our foreign minister is there. It shows who wants negotiations and who wants just accusations against Azerbaijan.

President Aliyev, thank you for joining us on this special program on Euronews. Thank you very much for your time.

-Thank you.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

09.10.2020 [21:00]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has addressed the nation.
AZERTAC presents the nationwide address of the head of state.

Nationwide address of President Ilham Aliyev

- Dear fellow compatriots.

Today, the victorious Azerbaijani Army liberated several settlements. I heartily congratulate all the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion.

I would like to bring to your attention the names of the liberated settlements: Hadrut settlement, Chayli village, Yukhari Guzlak village, Gorazilli village, Gishlag village, Garajalli village, Afandilar village, Suleymanli village, Sur village.

The liberation of these villages and the settlement of Hadrut is our historic victory. Azerbaijan is liberating the occupied territories. Good news comes from the frontline almost every day. Every day, our soldiers and officers perform their combat missions with dignity. At the same time, they are capturing more and more commanding positions. They are taking over strategic heights. Thus, the operational plan is being fully implemented. The operational plan is based on modern combat principles. Today, the Azerbaijani Army has a complete advantage on the battlefield – both in terms of logistics and combat readiness.

Many pieces of the enemy's military equipment have been destroyed and seized in today's battles. I can say that the Armenian army has suffered a major blow since 27 September. I would simply like to bring to your attention the list of Armenia's destroyed and seized military equipment and hardware – 16 command posts, 196 tanks, 38 BM-21, one "Hurricane", 10 self-propelled artillery units, including eight "Acacia", two "Qvozdika", 36 infantry fighting vehicles, 24 artillery batteries, 2 RM or air defense installations, two launch facilities of the "S-300" complex, 25 OSA anti-aircraft missile systems, two "Cube" anti-aircraft missile systems, four "Repellent" radio-technical barrier installation, 136 cannons, 56 mortars, one TOS-1A flame thrower, two radar stations, one "Kalchuga" antenna. In addition, 18 tanks, four artillery pieces, 22 infantry fighting vehicles, 12 mortars, four UAZ trucks, one excavators, 27 "Igla" complexes, one ZIL truck and nine GAZ trucks have been seized.

I should also say that not a single piece of military equipment belonging to the Azerbaijani Armed Forces is in the hands of the enemy. The enemy tells tales and lies to his people. They falsify facts, want to deceive their own people, want to deceive the international community saying that they are allegedly attacking us, that they have taken back some of our positions. This is a lie. There is an objective observation of the battles, and any military expert can see that the Azerbaijani Army today has beaten Armenia on the battlefield. The Azerbaijani Army is showing its superiority. Azerbaijani soldiers and officers are showing high moral and psychological qualities, showing high spirits. Because we are fighting on our own land, we are liberating our own lands. Armenian soldiers are occupiers. The land where the battles are going on is not theirs. They are abandoning their positions and running away. However, several layers of a deeply echeloned defense system were established along the line of contact over the past 30 years. Engineering and fortification facilities were built. It is very difficult to break them, to cross them. In some cases, we needed a few days to break through some fortifications. At the same time, we are doing everything to minimize losses. Therefore, in some cases, we strengthened our positions in various directions and then prepared for a new operation so that there is a maximum result and minimum loss.

Today, the Azerbaijani flag flies in the liberated lands. Today, Azerbaijani soldiers are guarding the trenches dug by Armenians in our occupied lands – we are in their trenches, not them in ours, we are in their posts, we are in their tanks. We are now using the military equipment taken as booty – 18 tanks. Their tanks are now fighting them on the battlefield. This is the advantage of the Azerbaijani Army, this is our advantage. Today, we show in open media, on the Internet how accurately and precisely the enemy's equipment is being destroyed.

The enemy is in panic, the enemy is hysterical. The leadership of the enemy country is completely at a loss. He regularly calls different countries, heads of state and government of different countries, repeatedly asks for help, begs for help, implores several times a day. He is at their feet. He humiliates

himself – come and rescue us. The only way to save them is to leave our lands. We have said this many times – leave our lands of your own accord. Implement UN Security Council resolutions or you will regret it. Do you think that Azerbaijan will put up with this situation? It will not! I have said this many times. Did you think that the Azerbaijani people would put up with these insults? They won't! I have said this many times. But if you sit on our lands, poison our sacred land and then put forward claims against us – look at this impudence! We put them in their place. We showed them where they belong. We are chasing them so badly that they will never forget this sprint.

Today, battles are taking place along the entire frontline. Azerbaijan is strengthening its positions in all directions and we are forcing the aggressor to make peace. This is the main purpose of this operation. We have shown them that we are winning on the battlefield, internationally and politically. They saw our strength and they saw our determination. They saw that no force in the world can turn us away from the right path. No country in the world can influence our determination. Whoever else you beg, whoever else you kneel before, whoever else you implore – no-one can influence us! We are on the right path, we are winning, we are getting the upper hand and we will take back our lands! We will restore our territorial integrity!

But we are giving the occupier probably the last chance to leave our lands. Get out, make a commitment, go back to the negotiations, go back to the format of the negotiations. What does the prime minister of Armenia think of himself? Is it possible to talk to us in this way? Now he knows his place. By saying that “Karabakh is Armenia” Karabakh will never become Armenia. Let's see whether he can say that “Karabakh is Armenia” now. He can't even speak now.

Their foreign minister has had to go to Moscow for talks now. Let him say “Karabakh is Armenia” there. If he says such a thing, there can be no talks. I said that no-one can force us. He said we should negotiate with the bandit leader of the criminal “Nagorno-Karabakh republic”. We can never agree to this and this will never happen. Therefore, the events that took place in the political sphere yesterday and the day before yesterday show that the Armenian leadership has finally begun to realize, after receiving a major blow to the head, that it will only do what we tell them to do. Whatever we say will happen. We are giving him a chance to leave our land through negotiations and peace. We will return to these lands anyway. We will restore our territorial integrity. The whole world saw that, including Armenia. We don't want bloodshed. We don't want martyrs. We want our lands back. Get out of our land! Go and live in your own country. We will get our lands back! Therefore, they should not miss this historic opportunity.

I think that today's meeting in Moscow will clarify many things. They must accept the basic principles. However, Pashinyan said he did not accept them. He said that he would not give back an inch of land to Azerbaijan. What happened?! Why can't you hold on to these lands? Why can't you? What happened? Why did you run away? Now you are kneeling before others, humiliating yourself and humiliating your people. You have brought your country to level zero. He said he would not give back these lands. Who is even going to ask you whether you will give it back or not?! We came and took it, and that is all. We will take as much as we need, if we want, we will take more. As we could have done in July. I have talked about that. In July, we could easily move into the territory of Armenia and occupy lands. No-one could have stopped us. These battles are proving that. We didn't do that. I didn't! However, our army was ready for that. I did not let them because there is a political will. We act within the law. We don't set our sights on the lands of other countries but we will not give our land to anyone either. So what happened, Pashinyan? You said that the ‘Nagorno-Karabakh republic’ covers all the occupied territories. So come and defend them now. Why are you running to Moscow? Why do you keep calling and annoying world leaders? Who did you not call? Who did you not annoy? I would advise him to call shamans. Let them help him. Or call a chief of a tribe living on a remote island and he will save his life. As they say, he has become a joke character. Open up and scroll through social networks. People are making fun of you and circulating jokes. There has never been anyone in the world who would humiliate his country so much. Why? Because he cannot come and sit on someone else's land and keep it.

That is why I turn to the people of Azerbaijan and say that we will take our lands back. I remember the leader of the gang illegally living in Nagorno-Karabakh and soon to be thrown out of there conducting a “swearing-in” ceremony in Shusha. At that time, this reverberated a lot in Azerbaijani society. It had a major impact. We took it as an insult – all of us without exception. I remember also receiving calls that we should not allow this to happen, that we should bomb and destroy it. Of course, I could not go for that.

Because our war is not against civilians. Unlike Armenia, we do not fire on civilians. But we have not forgotten that. Now let him go and look at the building where he was sworn in. See what state it is in now.

We know what to do and when. Therefore, our successful operation today has led to great results. I know what to do, how and when. The Azerbaijani people believe in me. Relying on this trust, I also take all necessary measures, run our country with confidence in all areas, including army building.

I want to touch upon another issue. The people of Azerbaijan have repeatedly heard from mediators and leaders of some international organizations that there is no military solution to this conflict. I said that I do not agree with this thesis, and I was right. I was! Negotiations have been going on for about 30 years. Has the issue moved off the ground? Has a centimeter of land been given to us through negotiations? Did they force the aggressor to leave our land and implement the UN Security Council resolutions? No! How is this problem being resolved now? Isn't this a military way? This issue is being resolved by military means. Military and then political. If this operation had not taken place, if we had not inflicted the necessary blows on the aggressor, if we had not taught them a lesson, would they have fled to Moscow to negotiate?! He would be satisfied and keep saying that we will not give back the land. We have forced them. We have brought them to such a state that they are looking for a place to hide but cannot find it. They are sitting tight-lipped like mice, keeping silence. So where is your persistence? Where is your arrogance? Where is your "heroism"? You said that "Karabakh is Armenia". Karabakh is Azerbaijan. Everyone should know this, including those in charge of Armenia today. I tell them again that if they commit fraud again after the Moscow talks, they will regret it. We will take back our lands – peacefully or through war. There is no question about that! We want to organize it peacefully, we want to do it peacefully. We give Armenia one last chance, one last chance! They shouldn't rely on anyone. No-one will help them. Armenia is powerless before us. Armenia is on its knees before us. We have brought them to their knees for the souls of our martyrs. The blood of our martyrs did not remain unavenged. I have repeatedly said in meetings with representatives of the families of martyrs and parents of martyrs that we will take revenge. The blood of our martyrs will not remain on the ground. We do not want blood. We want our lands to be given back to us. Let them not delay this issue any longer. There is no such thing as status-quo. It is over. The status quo should be like this or like that. I have changed the status quo, I have changed it! There, on the battlefield. There is no status quo. There is no line of contact. We smashed it. They had been building this line of contact for 30 years. The terrain in that region is a natural fortification. We are going from the bottom up. In fact, they were building concrete fortifications there for 30 years. We broke through. No-one can do anything where there is an Azerbaijani soldier. We have destroyed that line of contact today. There is no line of contact. Now they are saying there will be a new line of contact. It will not happen! We will take back our lands. What line of contact can we talk about now? No, we have destroyed it, we have done that, we have shown determination, we have shown strength, we have relied on the will of our people and today we are winning. We are winning a historic victory! This victory is the brightest victory among the victories of the Azerbaijani people. These victories will be continued in the future. We will liberate our lands and restore our territorial integrity! We will drive the enemy away. I know that the people of Azerbaijan liked my words. We will drive them away to the very end. Our flag will be raised in all occupied territories and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan will be restored. Long live the Azerbaijani Army! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

CNN International TV channel's "Connect the World" program broadcast interview with President Ilham Aliyev

09.10.2020 [20:35]

"Connect the World" program of CNN International TV channel has broadcast an interview with President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

-Sir, I spoke to the President of Armenia, and he told me that this conflict is dramatically different from the previous clashes, because of the open support that Turkey is providing Azerbaijan. Specifically, he told me this. Turkey with its military officials, generals, mercenaries, terroristic jihadists brought in thousands to Azerbaijan to fight Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey with his military might pretending they are there in order to protect some international logistic structures. Are there any Turkish forces or Turkish equipment in Azerbaijan right now sir?

-Turkish equipment yes, Turkish forces no. And frankly speaking, I regret that Armenian president is using this opportunity to address the world through CNN to spread rumors. I cannot call it otherwise, because what he said as you presented to me I didn't see his presentation but what I heard from you is absolutely wrong. It is false information. Turkey is supporting us, but this is a political support. This is a diplomatic support, and if not for this support if not for very open position of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan saying that Azerbaijan is not alone, Turkey is with Azerbaijan, probably today Armenia would have achieved its goal, which is actually to spread the geography of this conflict and to involve as many countries as possible so these countries help them on the battlefield. And I would also like to remind Armenian president who was behind Armenia when Armenia in the beginning of 90s was occupying our territories We have enough evidences who was helping them to occupy our territories. Therefore, from Armenian side to say that somebody is helping Azerbaijan is absolutely wrong, is false information and we reject it.

-You have said that there is Turkish equipment in Azerbaijan. What Turkish equipment sir?

-Weapons, Turkish weapons, not only Turkish weapons, Russian weapons, Israeli weapons, Belarusian weapons, Ukrainian weapons, you name it. Because today the geography of our purchases of military equipment is getting broader and broader, and we pay for that. If you look how Armenia gets their weapons and from where, you will see that they could not afford to pay for those weapons which they have, because that's billions of dollars. For a poor country it's impossible. They get weapons free of charge from their ally, we get weapons paying for them.

-Okay, let me put this to you sir. We have seen satellite imagery that would suggest Turkish F-16s are on at least one of your bases. You haven't bought F-16s. So, is that correct? Are there F-16s on the ground that would suggest significant support for Azerbaijan?

-I agree with you when you say on the ground. F-16s came to Azerbaijan for military exercise. Last year Azerbaijan and Turkey had ten joint military exercises. Turkey is our ally and it is common here to have military exercises, including air force. By the way this year due to the pandemic we had only two military exercises. One of them was just before the Armenian attack on Azerbaijan happened. So F-16s are on the ground, they are not flying. They are not in any way participating in any kind of battle. And by the way...

-You are categorical about that. That F-16s are not in use.

-I am categorical and even more I want to tell you about one Armenian fake in the first days of the clashes they said that Turkish F-16 shot down Armenian SU-25. This is fake and those who are accusing us of this now should apologize. Because everybody knows that this is a fake. F-16s are here, but they are on the ground as you correctly mentioned.

-OSCE's Minsk Group which has sought a solution to this long-standing dispute since the 1990s is co-chaired by France, by the US and by Russia. The French foreign minister has specifically warned that Turkey's backing of Azerbaijan risks fueling the internationalization of this conflict. You say you are supported by Turkey. But what do you say to the French when they say this support risks this conflict getting worse?

-I do not agree with that. As I said, Turkey plays a stabilizing role in the region and in particular in the situation with respect to Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Every country can afford to

have a partner, and an ally. And Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani people are happy to have such a partner, such an ally and such a brother like Turkey. We do not object when Armenia considers France their ally and France is a country which at this moment supports most of all Armenia. At the same time we see that it's up to countries themselves to choose allies. For instance, French foreign minister is not concerned about Russia supporting Armenia with weapons free of charge and he doesn't think that it is internationalization of the conflict. But when Turkey expresses legitimate, political support it becomes a concern and I, frankly speaking, cannot understand that how one NATO country can act in such a way against another NATO country? NATO members are supposed to be allies. But we don't see it.

-Can you explicitly lay out the goals of your campaign at present?

Our goal is to defend our people, to defend our country and to defend our right to live on our land. It was Armenia who on September 27th launched an artillery attack on Azerbaijani military position and on our villages and cities. During these days of clashes we have 31 victims among civilians, almost 200 wounded, and more than 1,000 houses demolished, or seriously damaged by Armenian army. We had to respond, had to defend ourselves. Our respond was very sensitive to Armenia, was very painful. They suffer very serious defeat, they run away from us, we liberate part of our territory, we install our national flag on the occupied territories, we restore our territorial integrity and we are right. We are fighting on our soil, Armenia is fighting on the soil of another country.

-How many military casualties have you sustained sir?

-With respect to military casualties I already referred to that, we will disclose this information after the active phase of the clashes is over.

Do you intend to retake all of Nagorno-Karabakh, all disputed lands?

-We are talking about Nagorno-Karabakh and seven districts which surround former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous district. Because Armenia not only occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and expelled all Azerbaijanis who were about 25 percent of the population of autonomous district but also occupied seven districts of Azerbaijan with the population of 700,000 people. So, our main objective is to liberate those territories and to allow Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons to go back. As far as Nagorno-Karabakh is concerned we think and that was officially declared many times that after the war is over, after occupational forces are withdrawn, Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh will live side-by-side as in any other country with a multi-ethnic population, and one day, I am sure, they will again become good neighbors to each other.

-The Armenian president told me that your demand that Armenia set a time-table for withdrawing troops should be put to the “Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh” because your dispute is with them. He added though that in Nagorno-Karabakh 95 percent of the population were Armenians, because they are living there for thousands of years. You say that Karabakh is Azerbaijan. But how would you address the fears of ethnic-Armenians there?

-First of all...

-Hold on sir, that they might be ethnically cleansed if the government of Azerbaijan retakes the territory.

-I understand, today in Azerbaijan thousands of Armenians live in different cities of our country primarily in the capital city of Baku. One of the Armenian long-range destructive missile, ‘Smerch’, which they use to attack our second largest city of Ganja hit the house of native Armenian woman. So, today in Azerbaijan there are thousands of Armenians who live in peace, and dignity. But in Armenia, all Azerbaijanis have been expelled. Armenia's population is 99 percent Armenians. They committed ethnic cleansing against us. What Armenian president said, he is lying again. Today it is not 95 percent, today it is 100 percent Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, because 25 percent of Azerbaijanis who lived there were ethnically cleansed by the Armenian regime. I regret that such a person with such an important position is spreading lies. Look in the internet, look at Kurekchay Peace Agreement, which was signed in the beginning of the 19th century, between Azerbaijani khan of Karabakh and Russian general. Nothing is said about Armenian population. Armenian population was resettled to our land by Russian Empire in order to change the religious composition of the region after the Russo-Persian wars. This is a historical fact and what Armenian president says is fake, absolutely fake.

-I must point out that as you suggest that the Armenian president is spreading lies and fake information so he has said the same thing about Azerbaijan and yourself.

-Look at the internet, look at the documents and you will see who is telling the truth and who is lying.

-I have to make the point that each side is trading insults at this point. How would Azerbaijan accept international mediation and stop military action? What are your bottom lines here?

-We have international mediation for 28 years. OSCE Minsk Group is in "action", actually is passive form for 28 years since 1992 and this mediation led to nothing. This mediation led to what is happening today. This mediation was not enough in order to press Armenia to leave the territories which do not belong to them.

-Have you been in touch with Washington on this? I mean what is the Trump administration telling you? US, of course, is one of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group.

-We have very diverse relations with the United States, relations are developing very successfully in many areas. As far as Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is concerned, three countries of the Minsk Group co-chairs have the same right and the same responsibility to mediate and when representatives from these countries come, they come altogether, representatives of three countries. Therefore, there is no distinction in their performance. But of course we understand that some countries are more pro-Armenian some countries are even more pro-Armenian.

-So, can I just ask you who are you speaking to in Washington? Is it state or is it the Trump administration? The Armenian president certainly told us that they have spoken to Robert O'Brien, for example.

-Well, Armenian prime minister I think the only person whom he did not speak during these days is a head of a tribe in some far away you know remote island. He called everyone. He called President Putin five times, he called President Macron, I don't know four times. He called Chancellor Merkel. The only one left is a tribal chief. I advice to call him and to complain on Azerbaijan and to send some people from his tribe to help poor poor Armenia whom Azerbaijan is destroying.

-So, that wasn't the question, the question was who are you speaking to in Washington is it the state or is it the Trump administration?

-We speak with administration, we speak to State Department. Actually, they contacted us. I gave instructions to our foreign ministry, to my administration to be in touch with all those who call us, who want to express their position and express their view on how to move forward. But it is actually doesn't make any difference whether it is State Department or White House because for us it is US Administration anyway.

-What's the position as you understand it in Washington?

-The position in Washington is not different from the position of other co-chairs. They are supporting the principles based on which the solution must be found. It is Armenia who is against those principles. Those principles say that territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh should be returned to Azerbaijan in time and when you were referring to my statement time-table, that is exactly what is in the documents. It is not me who invented them. It is Armenia who is against.

-Let's have a look at Russia's position then, because it is not clear to me what Washington's position is from what we have just discussed. But let's have a look at Russia's position. Let me play out some sound from the Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. He said we remain deeply concerned by the situation in the region and we believe that the sides must stop the fire and come to the negotiating table. They are asking that you go to the negotiating table. The Russian president has described the fighting as a tragedy. You personally spoke to Vladimir Putin as I understand it on Wednesday. What did he tell you? What are Russia's red lines here?

-I called President Putin in order to congratulate him on the occasion of his birthday on the 7th of October. I do it every year and so does he. So every year we congratulate each other on our birthdays. And that was a coincidence that his birthday is coincided with the events. Therefore, of course, we discussed this issue and our press service has issued a press-release about that, I think it will not be right for me to say something more than it was released in the press.

-I wish you would, I mean are you prepared to defy Moscow's appeal? For peace talks?

-We are for peace talks. If you allow me, I will just give you two examples. Azerbaijan is a constructive partner to negotiation table. We think that the principles which have been elaborated by the United States, Russia and France should be basis for settlement. Armenian President rejects them, I am sorry, Armenian prime minister rejects them. Because the person who is in charge in Armenia is not a president, but prime minister, and with whom I had negotiations. So he said that "Karabakh is Armenia". That makes negotiations senseless. Because how you can say "Karabakh is Armenia" and negotiate to return

the territories back? He said Azerbaijan should negotiate not with Armenia, but with Nagorno-Karabakh which is a change of format. So we are ready for negotiations if Armenian prime minister returns back from the skies where he is flying, back to earth.

-That is not the position, as I understand it, from the Russians who said both sides must stop the fire and come to the negotiating table.

-Those who started fire, should stop first and we will do the same. But to go back to negotiation table. Pashinyan regime did everything to destroy negotiations. They made the statement, they attacked us in July, they attacked us in August, they attacked us in September. They do everything in order to disrupt negotiations. We are ready. But they are not.

If you won't stop, and they won't stop. What happens next? Where does this leave the conflict which so many people are now concerned could escalate into much wider, regional war?

-It should not escalate wider, I call all the countries to stay away from this situation. It is our bilateral issue with Armenia. Mediators they have, they have their mandate. Their mandate is not to interfere on the ground, their mandate is to facilitate to find the solution. So, they will continue, I am sure within the framework of their mandate. Armenians' attempt to make this conflict international is very counter-productive, destructive and dangerous for many countries. So, Armenia should understand that occupation cannot last forever. Status quo must be changed. And by the way presidents, former presidents of France, former presidents of United States and President of Russia made a statement, when all of them were in charge, status-quo is unacceptable and must be changed. I support it but Armenia is against.

-I want to get your response to a new report from Amnesty International claiming they have identified Israeli-made MO-95 DPICM cluster munitions. That appear to have been fired by Azerbaijani forces. Now CNN cannot independently verify those claims nor the apparent video of the explosions. But sir, how do you respond to Amnesty's claims?

-I would say that we don't have any contact with the organization which you named, because of their pro-Armenian and anti-Azerbaijani position. First, it is wrong, it is false and second, I would recommend them to see how cluster bombs are being used against our civilians. How they use "Smerch", how they use "Elbrus", "Tochka U", ballistic missiles on our cities - Ganja, Goranboy, Naftalan, Yevlakh and other cities are under Armenian bombardment. Why does Amnesty International see or want to see only one side? Why they do not see another side? That's a question.

-Let me just push you on this. Are you categorically saying that cluster munitions have not been used by Azerbaijani forces? And if so, are you prepared to allow independent observers to verify that?

-Yes, we are prepared to do it, also we are prepared to see how Armenia will allow independent observers to see what they have been doing. And though it should be not unilateral, it should be bilateral. We defend ourselves and we must do it. But our targets are only military objectives. And almost all of what we have destroyed, we destroyed from the very modern equipment. You can find it on internet. It's Turkish brand new, excellent, marvelous fighter drones. It is other equipment which destroys you know tanks, guns, military positions. So we don't need to use these kind of weapons in order to achieve our goal. Our target are not civilians. Our target are occupants, we must return our land to those whom it belongs to.

-Sir, Armenia can and will speak for themselves. I am asking you specifically, you categorically deny do you, that cluster munitions have been used by Azerbaijani forces.

-Yes, I deny it and I want to ask you. Did you ask this question to Armenian president?

-We didn't have the information at the time.

-That's the point, that's the point. You ask me, ask him, ask him. Let the Amnesty International ask him what they do.

-We will certainly ask him for a statement. I'm asking you.

-Ask him. I already answered. No. Ask him.

-I will. Thank you, sir.

Sky News TV channel broadcast interview with President Ilham Aliyev

10.10.2020 [01:21]

Sky News TV channel has broadcast an interview with President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

-Thank you very much President Aliyev for agreeing to do his interview with Sky News. The French President seems confident that the truce will be agreed in the coming days and that you will be able to resume negotiations. How likely is that and on what terms?

-It depends on the position of Armenia. Azerbaijan has always been very supportive to negotiation table, and frankly speaking for 28 years since the OSCE Minsk Group was established we are involved in negotiations. We had hopes and still have hopes that negotiations will lead to progress, and will lead to political settlement. But unfortunately Armenia's position was opposite. They used negotiation only as a pretext in order to make this process endless. In other words, they wanted always to seal the status quo, to keep status quo unchanged, and not to return the territories back which they have to according to the UN Security Council resolutions and according to the basic principles which are on the table, which were elaborated by the OSCE Minsk Group. Therefore, I hope that after this bitter defeat which Armenia is suffering on the battlefield, they will be more reasonable, and they will listen to the advises of the mediators, and will be sincere on negotiations table. Negotiations should leave to the political settlement, and to the liberation of the occupied territories.

-But what territories exactly are we talking about? Are we simply talking about Nagorno-Karabakh or we talking about the seven occupied Azerbaijani territories that they call their security zone? Because clearly you are not getting all of it back.

-Our territorial integrity is recognized by the whole world. All the countries recognize territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, which includes Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenians' position, actually was also a pretext that we are using these seven regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh as an excuse to occupy a security zone. But today's clash shows that there is no security zone in modern world. Modern military equipment does not provide security even for long distance. The security must be provided by political means. Therefore, we were always saying that political settlement will provide security guarantees for all-for Azerbaijanis, for Armenians, for other nationalities who live in the area. And the basic principles which Armenia rejected to support and clearly says how the territories are going to be returned back. In the first stage five regions of Azerbaijan which are situated on the south eastern part of Nagorno-Karabakh. Then two regions of Azerbaijan which are situated between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. Then Azerbaijanis return to Nagorno-Karabakh. There have been 25 percent of Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh their rights must also be provided. And they go back to where they lived in the ancient city of Shusha and other places and we restore normal communications, we restore people-to-people contact, and slowly and slowly I am sure people will reconcile. That's the plan of the mediators and we support it.

-Would you recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's independence if you're allowed to have 25 percent Azerbaijani population there?

-No, no, never. And that has never been the issue on negotiation table. Our position was very clear, that Azerbaijan will never recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's independence, because it's our ancient land. The history of Nagorno-Karabakh is now well-known. Second, it is an integral part of Azerbaijan and why should we give independence to small number of people? Azerbaijan is a multi-ethnic country as almost all the countries in the world. National minorities live in peace and dignity in Azerbaijan and in many countries in the world. Being national minority does not mean that you have a right for secession, have a right for separatism. Separatism is a big threat to international community and all the countries in the world condemn separatism. What has been done against us was separatism of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and military aggression of Armenia's state against Azerbaijan which led to the situation which we are facing now. Occupation, a million of Azerbaijani refugees, ethnic-cleansing against Azerbaijanis, destroyed cities and villages. Now when we are liberating our territories, there are video about what happened there. Everything is destroyed, it's as if like Stalingrad. It's even worth than Stalingrad after World War II.

-But that is exactly what you are doing now to the regional capital Stepanakert. That is what you are doing to Shusha which yesterday was targeted not once but twice. A double hit on the cathedral there when it was very clear that civilians and journalists were sheltering inside.

-That was first of all a provocation from the Armenian side. We never did that in the past, we have Armenian church in the center of Baku. You can send someone, or when you come...

-It's not that the Armenians targeted their own cathedral. How can that be?

-That's probably their provocation in order to present us in such a way but I can tell you that they are shelling our cities. Do you know that we have 31 killed civilians as a result of Armenian bombardment? 170 wounded people and more than 1 thousand houses totally demolished or damaged because of Armenian attack on our civilians. And they use ballistic missiles. Ballistic missiles!

-With all due respect, that is also what you are doing with your shells on Nagorno-Karabakh and you have very sophisticated drone technology which should allow you to see precisely what you are targeting. So, why the civilian structures are getting hit?

-No, no. We never attack civilians. What we did in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, we attacked their tanks, we attacked their guns, we attacked their artillery systems, and also we attacked their military infrastructure. It is not our fault that these military infrastructures sometimes is situated in the city center. But we never on purpose, we never attack civilians. Yes, we have sophisticated weapons but not all of them are sophisticated. There could be some mistakes. Therefore, there was never a deliberate attack on civilians on our side. On the contrary, every day the city of Tartar which is very close to the line of contact is being bombed. We have 2 thousand shells a day on the city. It is almost destroyed and nobody talks about them. So, please let's be fair about that, we didn't start it, and we don't need to attack civilians. We need our territories. Why should we attack civilians with whom we plan to live side by side after the war is over. People of Armenian origin in Nagorno-Karabakh are hostages of a criminal regime which is there. They will, I am sure, live side by side with us in peace and dignity after the war is over.

-You have said that you would like to see Armenia withdraw its troops. But you have also said that you are not prepared to accept peacekeepers there. How else can you reassure your counterparts, the Armenians, that you will not then retake the whole lands?

-If you can tell me when I said that I don't want to see peacekeepers, I will answer you, but I never said that. That's wrong information I am sorry, I never said...

-But you won't accept peacekeepers on that territory.

-Peacekeepers is one of the elements which is provided in the basic principles for the settlement, which was elaborated by the OSCE Minsk Group and there is an item about peacekeepers. But we did not come to this item to discuss it properly. Because it's premature. Because first, we need to resolve the core issue-the occupation, liberation of territories and then, when Azerbaijanis will return, then of course peacekeepers should come. It is in the framework of agreement, if it is signed by both sides. Then both sides will select who these peacekeepers will be. So we are not against it, but we actually were not in active phase of negotiations on this item.

-It doesn't sound as though your terms of negotiations have changed since before this latest vast outbreak of hostilities. So, I am just wondering, why weapons should be placed down now if negotiations have never succeeded before?

-You know, negotiations are taking place since 1992. Since that time there have been zero progress on the ground, zero progress. Armenia always was using some manipulation tools in order to disrupt negotiations. This year, starting from July they launched three times a military attack on us. On July, they attacked our civilians and our military positions on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan far away from Karabakh region. That lasted for four days, we pushed back, they could not occupy territories, and we stopped because we don't have any military purpose on Armenian side. On August 23, they send a sabotage group to commit a terror act which was detained and the head of the group gives evidence. At the end of September, they launched the artillery bombardment of our cities and killed immediately innocent people. We had to respond, we had to push back, that's what we did. Therefore, we are in favor of negotiations. I can give you two examples, Armenian prime minister last year announced that "Karabakh is Armenia". What does it mean? It means the end of...

-I asked him what he meant.

-What he meant?

-He said that he meant that ever since the 4th century there have been Armenian churches, there has been an Armenian population and there has ever since the beginning of the Soviet Union much larger Armenian population, ethnic Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh than Azerbaijani.

-You know, he is telling, mildly speaking, not truth. The Armenians' settlement in that area started in the late 18th and early 19th centuries after the treaty of Kurekchay was signed by Azerbaijani Ibrahim Khan, and Russian general. As a result of that treaty Karabakh khanate became part of Russia, and Russia started...

-I am sorry.

-That's how it was. That's how Armenians came to Nagorno-Karabakh. It's only two centuries, less. He is telling about 4th century.

-You have been in power since the beginning of this century. And yet, there has been no progress made on this issue. It is all very well to blame the Armenians. But do you take some personal responsibility for the fact that your soldiers are now dying on the frontline because you politically have not been able to resolve this?

-Our soldiers are dying for our land. Our soldiers are dying on Azerbaijani soil, historical and internationally recognized. On which soil now Armenian soldiers are dying? They are dying now in Fuzuli, they are dying in Jabrayil, they are dying in other Azerbaijani territories. What they are doing there? You should ask Pashinyan what his soldiers is doing there? 90 percent of the so-called "army of Nagorno-Karabakh" consists of Armenian citizens. They are on our land. It is just enough to look at the map. For us it is a patriotic war. We are defending ourselves. We want to restore our territorial integrity to allow one million refugees to go back. That's what we are doing. For 28 years we were patient to believe that negotiations will lead to progress. As a result, we got what we have got now. When we pushed back and punished the aggressor, you know we are attacked politically. I accepted the basic principles, Pashinyan rejected it. I accept the format of negotiations which is between Armenia-Azerbaijan, Pashinyan says no, Azerbaijan should negotiate with Nagorno-Karabakh. This is acceptable not only by me, but also by Minsk Group. So, he is to blame for what is happening now.

-The French and the Russian say that they have intelligence that Syrian mercenaries are being used on your frontlines. Do you categorically deny that?

-Absolutely, categorically. So far I haven't been provided with a single document which testified this intelligence. Let them show this intelligence to me. Our intelligence representatives had contacts after these accusations have been made. During this contacts with their counterpart no evidence was provided. If there is evidence why is it not on the newspapers? Why is it not on your channel? Where is this evidence? Show it to me. There is no evidence. We don't need mercenaries we have 100 thousand fighters, well-prepared, well-trained. We have modern equipment, we have all the necessary military components in order to liberate our land and that's what we are doing. This is fake news.

-One final question, what gesture of good will could you put on the table to try and start negotiation at this stage?

-We already did that. By the way, I can tell you one more thing about who is against negotiations. Foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia were invited, even before this outbreak, to Geneva to meet Minsk Group co-chairs. Armenian foreign minister was supposed to go in the beginning of October, our foreign minister was supposed to go on the 8th of October. So, Armenian foreign minister ignored that, he didn't go. Our foreign minister yesterday was in Geneva, met with the co-chairs. And when we received the proposal from Russia to organize the meeting between foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Russia, we agreed. So our foreign minister just an hour ago landed in Moscow, and he will be meeting with his Russian counterpart. And I don't know what will be the program. Will he meet Armenian minister or not? But he is there. We want peaceful settlement, but settlement. We want solution, not imitation, not another 30 years of etceteras, practical steps, time-table. When our people are going back home? What will be the security guarantees for them? And how we will reconcile? Two nations must reconcile. We are neighbors, we cannot live in hostility forever. This must be stopped, but stopped on the basis of historical truth and international law.

-And a question about journalists operating in Nagorno-Karabakh. Your presidential spokesman has said that because they are there illegally on what you consider to be Azerbaijani territories, they are effectively fair game. Is that something that you believe also?

-Our position is very fair, clear. Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan and our position is that, if any foreign citizen, any-not only journalists- if he wants or she wants to visit Nagorno-Karabakh, please, let us know. We do not expect some kind of special attitude, just inform us that such and such person wants to visit and when we have this information, when we have this sign of respect to our territorial integrity we never object. So, those who go there without this, how to say, procedure, they are being put in the black list of our foreign ministry and the entrance for them to Azerbaijan is forbidden. But if those people write a letter to our foreign minister that we made a mistake, or next time we will inform you, we remove them from the black list. This is fair, the only thing we need is just respect. Therefore, for those journalists who want to go there and cover events, I'd like to use this opportunity to deliver messages to them. Please, inform our foreign ministry by e-mail and go there. No problem.

-And you will not target them.

-We never do it. We never do it. Why should we? We are interested that journalists are coming. I am everyday on TV, everyday I give interviews, because we want to deliver our point. We want to deliver our case, we are not aggressors. We are victims. It is Armenia who is an aggressor. We want the territories back. That's all.

-President Aliyev, thank you so much for talking to us today.

-Thank you very much.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Russian RBC TV channel

10.10.2020 [14:16]

As reported earlier, On October 10, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by the Russian RBC TV channel. On October 11, the TV channel broadcast the interview with the head of state. AZERTAC presents the interview.

- First of all, thank you very much for agreeing to speak with us. Before we start, I want to talk about the principles of RBK. A few days ago, there was an extensive interview with the prime minister of Armenia, and now we are here in Azerbaijan, in Baku, to speak with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. One more remark, before I ask the first question, condolences to the relatives of all the victims on both sides. I have heard a lot that no-one needs war and the sides could have done without it. And now the most difficult but also the most interesting task begins. The negotiations have ended. How would you assess what happened in Moscow? It is very important for us to understand what it all means.

- In general, I have a positive assessment because the statement circulated after the talks says that a ceasefire is being declared for humanitarian reasons and – what is of fundamental importance, this was the position of Azerbaijan and I am glad that this was reflected in this document – substantive negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan will begin and the format of negotiations remains unchanged. These are the two positions the new Armenian government tried to undermine. It is no secret to anyone that the statements we heard from Yerevan were essentially aimed at undermining the process of negotiations that had been developed over the years, including its fundamental principles, at undermining the format of negotiations. Therefore, it was extremely important that the Armenian side – of course, this happened as a result of what we have on the battlefield – was forced to accept that the fundamental principles form the basis for a settlement and they clearly state how the conflict should be settled and in what sequence the occupied territories should be returned to Azerbaijan. Secondly, the format of the negotiations remains unchanged. This means that negotiations have been, are and will be conducted only between Azerbaijan and Armenia. All attempts by the Armenian leadership to shift this responsibility onto the puppet regime that exists in Nagorno-Karabakh have failed. Thus, after that I am sure that we will no longer hear from Pashinyan that “Karabakh is Armenia”. Also, we will not hear his statements that Azerbaijan should negotiate with the so-called leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh. If he does make such statements, it will mean that he shows disrespect both for the mediators and for his own delegation, which agreed on this text in Moscow, and this will again undermine the process of negotiations. What did it lead to this time? I think everyone can clearly see that. I don't think he can allow himself to step on the same rake a second time.

- The ceasefire – how long will it last? How would you assess the fragility of this truce? What will it depend on?

- This ceasefire lasted for many years until the current escalation, for decades. There were certain clashes on the line of contact, there were provocations of the Armenian side on the state border in July this year. But such large-scale action has never taken place in the last almost 30 years. Therefore, everything will depend on the Armenian side. First of all, whether it will observe the ceasefire. Because this morning and yesterday, that in the early hours of today and in the morning, I was informed about attempts of a large-scale counter-offensive by the Armenian forces in many directions – an attempt to recapture Hadrut, an attempt to recapture the territories we have liberated in Jabrayil district and an attempt in the northern direction. In other words, understanding that the parties can come to an agreement in Moscow, they tried as much as possible to get back what they had lost and what never belonged to them. Therefore, the key factor for the durability of the ceasefire will be that Armenia must come to terms with the fact that we have these territories, that it will never see them again and will not make any attempts to recapture it by military means. The second equally important factor is exactly what I have just mentioned. At the negotiating table, we must see a constructive approach from the Armenian side, so that they stop trying to imitate the process of negotiations, so that they refrain from provocative actions and statements, and so that they are committed to finding a settlement. All we have seen from the Armenian side over the past year was precisely aimed at undermining the negotiations and blaming Azerbaijan. So we will see. We are committed to our statements. Azerbaijan is a country that has always fulfilled its obligations. I have always said that our signature has

the same value as our word. But the ceasefire is not a unilateral process, so we will see how the Armenian side will behave now.

- In Azerbaijan, as far as I understand in the two days I have been here, the public sentiment is that we must go to the end. How can you explain to the Azerbaijanis now that Baku has agreed to negotiations again?

- We are going to the end. We didn't stop. If the Armenian side is committed to the ceasefire regime, then, as I said yesterday, the phase of political settlement will begin and the phase of coercion to negotiations will end. Therefore, we will go to the end anyway. Our goal remains unchanged. Restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, which is recognized by the entire world community, the return of Azerbaijanis to the places of their original traditional residence, including Shusha and other settlements of Nagorno-Karabakh, and, of course, to all other territories outside the administrative border of the former NKAO. Therefore, our goal remains unchanged. The question is about how we will move towards this goal? We have always tried to follow the political path and have always heard that there is no military solution. We have proven that this is not the case. We showed on the battlefield that this is not the case and that these negotiations would have lasted another 30 years without a military component. What would have happened before that? Illegal settlement. This is an international crime and a violation of the Geneva Convention. Unfortunately, no-one ever reacted to this – the Minsk Group, the European Union or the UN. The destruction of Azerbaijan's historical heritage, the destruction of our cultural, historical and religious sites, the change of place names, the change of administrative boundaries of our regions, the change of the names of our mountains, rivers and cities. In other words, we would have had to wait another 30 years and then we would have been told that this is what the situation is like now, so put up with it. We have already been told that. Therefore, I think that the military component, or its first stage, has come to an end, we have now reached a political settlement which will secure that we reach the end and get what is rightfully ours. Therefore, I think that Azerbaijani society will perceive what happened yesterday and tonight correctly and continue to support our policy. Because we have always told our people the truth. We have always defended the interests of our people. What happened on the battlefield proved it to everyone again.

- You have met with Armenian prime minister Nikol Pashinyan several times before these events. After these events, are you ready to sit down at the same table or talk with him?

- You know, it is difficult to speak with a person who is very trustworthy. I had to negotiate with his predecessors, whom I consider war criminals because they have committed a bloody genocide in Khojaly, they are responsible for the killing of peaceful Azerbaijani population, for the destruction of our historical and cultural heritage. But I had to negotiate because we had to find a solution to this conflict. When the new government came to power, of course, first contacts with the new leadership were quite encouraging. I have already spoken about this once and do not want to repeat myself. But then the opposite happened. In other words, we felt deceived. We understand that we are negotiating with the enemy, but we must remain honest even with the enemy, honest at least to ourselves. We must respect our word. When this happened, we lost any desire to continue this senseless activity, of course. What can you talk about with your opponent if every word is a lie, if their lies are circulated in the world media and if lies are broadcast all over the world? They are probably used to lying in their own country. But when you lie about history and about the essence of the conflict in the Internet age, it is very quickly exposed. Therefore, I do not rule out such a possibility but this requires certain conditions. At this stage, I don't think it would be productive. On the contrary. The Armenian leadership should finally understand that it is impossible to speak to Azerbaijan in the language of ultimatums, insults and blackmail. I have never allowed myself such a tone of communication with anyone – neither within the country nor abroad. But when Pashinyan put forward seven ultimatums to us, when he insulted the feelings of the Azerbaijanis, he should have been punished for this. And we did that! Let him thank Putin for the fact that Russia has once again come to Armenia's rescue.

- You have mentioned the role of Russia. That is, it really was decisive in these negotiations.

- Russia as a co-chair of the Minsk Group, of course, has the same rights and powers as the other countries of the OSCE Minsk Group. But, of course, as our neighbor and a country that has a common history with both Azerbaijan and Armenia, Russia plays a special role, of course. This role is based both on history and on the interaction of our peoples, as well as the weight and role of Russia in the world and in our region, of course. Therefore, due to these objective reasons, the possibilities of Russia to influence the settlement of the conflict are incomparably greater than those of any other country. Therefore, we have

repeatedly appealed to the Russian leadership, so that the Russian leadership would engage the levers of political influence on Armenia and urge the Armenian side to end the occupation. This topic has been discussed many times, and I can tell you that in all of the numerous meetings I have had with my Russian colleague, this topic was discussed in one form or another, either in detail or not very extensively, but this did not happen. It is no secret that Armenia fully depends on Russia today. Security is provided by Russia, free weapons are provided by Russia. We have destroyed Armenian hardware probably worth billions of dollars. Right now, in a matter of two weeks. Where did they get this money? They don't have it. These are all free deliveries from Russia. Gas supply at preferential prices from Russia, electricity to some extent too. Railways, communications, a military base. Even the Armenian border with Turkey and Iran is guarded by Russian border troops. If it wasn't for this, it would be empty. What other country has so many levers to influence Armenia? None! And there are probably no other two countries in the world, one of which would be so completely dependent on the other. Therefore, of course, I am convinced that if there is insistence on the part of Russia, given that we have changed the status quo, broken the line of contact and brought Yerevan to its senses, I think that Russia certainly has a lot of tools to quickly convince Armenia that the only way out of the situation – and not only in terms of military confrontation but also for the future of Armenia in general – is to find a solution together with Azerbaijan. And it is quite simple – leave the territory, withdraw the troops, our people will return there and we will try to live side by side again.

- I will now ask you about another country – Turkey. Azerbaijan and you personally have been repeatedly accused these days of the fact that everything, including this conflict, is controlled by Turkish authorities. Yesterday and tonight, we did not see Turkey at the negotiating table. Why?

- This shows that all these opinions were false and that it was deliberate media speculation. There were several goals. First, to further demonize Turkey and this, unfortunately, is becoming almost a norm in the so-called modern political fashion. This is completely unfounded. Turkey is defending its interests, defending its right to live its own life. Under the leadership of President Erdogan, Turkey ceased to be an obedient ally of the West. It dictates its will in its region and in the world. Turkey is reckoned with now. Turkey's authority has grown. The Turkish army is the second biggest army in NATO and it can solve any military-political problems. Therefore, of course, there is such open pressure from the West. It is even fraught with some very strange and negative emotional background in relation to Turkey. So this is the first reason – the demonization of Turkey. The second reason is the underestimation of Azerbaijan's potential, including military-technical, an attempt to introduce things in such a way that it was Turkey or someone under the influence of Turkey that solved a military issue. No! We have liberated our lands ourselves. The myth about the so-called victorious Armenian army has collapsed. It never existed. Those who know the history of the conflict are well aware that our lands were occupied also by the 366th motorized rifle regiment of the Soviet army, which was stationed in Khankandi and I think 70 percent of its servicemen were of Armenian origin. So it was Soviet weaponry and Soviet command with an Armenian composition, and they took an active part in both ethnic cleansing and genocide.

- When ... the events of the early 1990s ...

- Of course! Without the support and active participation of the 366th regiment, Armenia would not have seized our territories. Therefore, a myth was created afterwards that the Armenian army was victorious and the Azerbaijani one would not be able to resist it. This was why it was necessary to preserve this myth. Apparently, acknowledging a bitter defeat at the hands of Azerbaijan is beyond the capacity of Armenian society and leadership. Third, it was necessary to belittle the role and importance of Azerbaijan in the world arena. This is very difficult to do because Azerbaijan today has very extensive economic and political ties with countries of the world. Today we chair the Non-Aligned Movement, which brings together 120 countries, and we were elected unanimously. If our country did not have an independent potential, would we have won such respect? Therefore, all the insinuations that Turkey is directing Azerbaijan and that we are acting upon its will are absolutely wrong. This is also aimed at disrupting or undermining the Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood, but it will not succeed. By the way, if all this information hype around Azerbaijan and Turkey had a basis, then there would not have been today's statement. This statement was agreed with me and no-one else. If we were controlled by someone, this issue would probably not have been resolved so quickly. Therefore, Turkey plays a stabilizing role in the world and in the region. The active and very clear position of the Turkish leadership, personally its President and other officials during the escalation, essentially prevented the intervention of third countries in this conflict. Therefore, I believe that the role of

Turkey is extremely positive, and it should play an even greater role in our region, including the settlement of the conflict.

- Many in Russia will hear the phrase that “Turkey should play an even greater role”. What is hidden behind these words? What do you mean?

- I think it is too early to talk about this, because I am expressing the position of the Azerbaijani side. But I said in one of my recent interviews that the Minsk Group was formed many years ago, in 1992, with completely different geopolitical realities. And if we were to form a contact group of mediators today, the composition would be different. The composition should reflect the intentions and wishes of the parties to the conflict but the composition of the Minsk Group practically does not reflect that. The composition of a new contact group or a working group, whatever you call it, should reflect the existing balance of power in the region, the existing interests of the countries of the region and should be focused on results. Otherwise, what is the point? It doesn't make any sense. If we want to resolve the conflict, then it must be resolved within the framework of a new format. Notice how many new formats of cooperation – trilateral, quadripartite – have been set up recently to coordinate the positions of countries on many hot spots. After all, they are being created now, they are not created on the basis of any dogmas, on the basis of the real balance of power. Therefore, of course, there can be no doubt that Turkey should and will play an important role in the settlement of the conflict. In what form – legal or de facto – this is already a technical question.

- About the role of Russia. When I walked around Baku, I saw a lot of Azerbaijani flags and slightly fewer but still quite many Turkish flags, but I did not see a single Russian flag. Does this mean that Russia's influence in Azerbaijan has decreased or has the attitude of people in Azerbaijan changed towards Russia?

- I don't think it has changed. The fact that there are many Turkish flags is natural. We are fraternal peoples. Today there is such a level of trust, mutual support and relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan that, in my opinion, cannot be found between any other countries of the world, even the closest allies. This is a reality. And this reality was created by us – the leadership of Turkey and Azerbaijan. And it is not about our common roots and our common history. There are also peoples with close ethnic roots in the world, like Turkey and Azerbaijan, who are at war with each other. And you know that very well. Or they are engaged in intrigues against each other. Therefore, the presence of Turkish flags in Azerbaijan is a reality. Also, if you go to Turkey, you will see Azerbaijani flags in many places. As for the attitude towards Russia, I can give you one fact. Before the pandemic, the annual growth of Russian citizens visiting Azerbaijan was in the region of 15-20 percent. Last year it approached a million people. I have always said that Russians are attracted to Azerbaijan not only by the cuisine, not only by the beaches, not only by history, but also by the fact that they feel comfortable here, they feel at home, they speak Russian with our people. You probably know that nowhere else are there as many schools in Russian as in Azerbaijan – more than 300. There are Russian universities and branches in Azerbaijan. Russian musical and theater groups were here almost every week before the pandemic. Therefore, the attitude towards Russia and towards the Russian people inhabiting the Russian Federation is extremely positive in Azerbaijan. But you have already spent several days here and you know how the factor of the Armenian occupation influences the mentality of the people. People catch every word, people catch every gesture, every facial expression. But I will tell you quite frankly, during this time, during these days of the week when some Russian channels run rabid anti-Azerbaijani propaganda, falsification, manipulation, provide an unbalanced composition of talk show participants, when the Azerbaijani people are insulted, when the President of Azerbaijan is insulted on leading Russian channels, this, of course, does not add credibility to Russia. I brought this issue to the attention of the Russian leadership. Not in terms of the fact that we are concerned about it – the Azerbaijani society and public opinion are formed within Azerbaijan. But in terms of the fact that this may someday lead to certain difficulties in our plans. We have plans with Russia for the further development of cooperation. We are now actively working on five roadmaps for economic and other cooperation, there are very good issues politically. But the information attack we encountered in the Russian media during this time, of course, caused great harm to the public perception of Russia. I think it will take time and effort for the leadership of both sides to correct this situation.

- I will ask two more questions. 27 September, night or morning. Do you remember how the decision was made that you need to start responding, you need to start this war?

- Well, in practice decisions are made automatically. There are certain instructions for the servicemen of the Azerbaijani army. I think every army has that. What your actions should be in case of threat, in case

of attack. That is, we had no hesitation on how to act. Moreover, we were expecting this attack. I spoke about this from the UN platform a few days before the escalation. You can see the text of my speech – I said that Armenia is preparing for war. Armenia must be stopped. There were a lot of arguments in favor of that. First of all, the statement of the Armenian defense minister he made in America last year when he said that Armenia is preparing for a new war for new territories. Then Pashinyan's statements such as "Karabakh is Armenia" and so on. Further provocative actions in the form of demonstrative settlement of Armenians from Lebanon to Shusha, which is a war crime. Further, the insult of the Azerbaijani people by holding the so-called "swearing-in" ceremony in Shusha – in fact, for the first time in the entire existence of the occupation regime there. An attempt to move the parliament of the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic" from Khankandi to Shusha, and much more. All this was a provocation against us. Then July. An unprovoked attack on military positions, and we lost four servicemen and then a civilian in the very first hours. Then August. A sabotage group penetrating Goranboy district on the line of contact. The leader of this group is now giving evidence. We waited. We were ready. Naturally, the decision was made automatically, including myself, without any hesitation. We had to put the aggressor back in its place. In July, Azerbaijani society demanded a continuation. You probably know about this.

- Yes, there was a rally.

- Yes. In July, the main slogan at the rally was "Commander-in-Chief, give us weapons!" This is what people were saying. In July, we could have easily crossed the state border with Armenia and seized vast territories of the Armenian Republic. But we didn't.

- ...This did not happen in Karabakh.

- Quite right. We did not do that. There were no difficulties there. We showed this now when we broke the defense that was deeply echeloned for 30 years. The local terrain there is defense in itself. We were going from bottom up, we were breaking these concrete slabs thanks to the incredible efforts of the Azerbaijani Army, the heroism of our soldiers and officers. What would it have cost us to move into any point in Armenia? But I stopped it, I said that no, we will not go for that, we are not them. We will not enter the internationally recognized territory of Armenia. We reached the border, drove out the invaders who entered our territory and stopped there. In other words, after that we had to punish the aggressor and discourage it from even looking in our direction. And we did that. Look at what a miserable situation Pashinyan is in now. He humiliates himself, calls, begs. There is hardly anyone left he hasn't called yet. Heads of government of the European Union. And what does he demand? He demands that they recognize Nagorno-Karabakh. It speaks of a complete inadequacy of the Armenian leadership. There is an agreement between Azerbaijan and the European Union, one of which was initialed two years ago. It states that the European Union respects the territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of Azerbaijan's borders. We have documents on strategic partnership with seven EU member states. All of them recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Only a person who is completely far from politics and devoid of any knowledge in the international sphere can demand recognition for Nagorno-Karabakh. This is where they are now. And we had to punish them. We had to put them in their place. They should know that they can't talk to us like that and they won't get away with it. And they didn't. He will be held accountable for the tears of mothers, for the deaths of innocent young citizens of Armenia they are sending to the frontline.

- What will happen to the territories Azerbaijan has returned? What will they do there now?

- We will return our refugees to their homes. You can imagine the joy of these people, the joy of the inhabitants of Jabrayil, the villages of Fuzuli, the inhabitants of Tartar district, Hadrut, who will return to their lands after almost 30 years. There is nowhere to go back to now. The video footage we show from the liberated territories shows that everything there has been destroyed. We knew that it is worse than Stalingrad. Everything that was not destroyed was plundered. They even stole window frames, stole toilets. This is just looting elevated to public policy. Therefore, we will restore these territories.

- Will you rebuild them?

- We will rebuilt them. Of course. We will help. This year, according to our construction program for internally displaced persons, we are commissioning 7,000 apartments. Can you imagine? If we multiply that by five people on average, we accommodate 35,000 people a year. in other words, even by our standards it is a fairly medium-sized city. We have already accommodated more than 300,000 people. Every year we allocate huge funds from our budget to create good conditions for refugees. Each refugee receives a monthly allowance from the state. We will do it there. We will rebuild Jabrayil. We will rebuild all the villages. People who will live there will be involved in construction work. They will receive a land parcel

to rebuild their homes. Life will return there, children's laughter will return there. People will heave a sigh of relief. People will feel that they have regained their dignity. Can you imagine what it is like for Azerbaijanis to live in such a situation for so many years? Imagine my feelings when, on the line of contact, I looked at our destroyed cities through binoculars. Let the Armenian side give this a thought. They will not understand what it is like. But they should have thought about it earlier. They should not have hurt the feelings of the Azerbaijanis. We are a kind people, a peace-loving people but we will not allow our dignity to be trampled and insulted. When Pashinyan, in a drunken stupor, danced in Shusha on Jidir-Duzu, he signed up for what happened today.

- Are you going to visit these territories yourself?

- Of course! When we liberated Jojug Marjanli from occupation in 2016, I told our State Committee for Refugees and IDPs that they should ask the residents of this village if they would like to return. Because many years have passed, many of them are in Baku, many have jobs, children, schools, many live in other regions of Azerbaijan. Changing your place of residence, especially where everything is destroyed, is not so easy. You know, after some time I was informed that there was a queue. Even young people who had never been there, who were born afterwards. They all asked to be returned there as soon as possible. And in less than a year we rebuilt a village of 150 houses, built a school, a medical facility, a mosque, all the infrastructure, installed gas lines and roads there. This has become a symbol of our return. When I arrived there and saw the faces of these people, their joy, tears of joy in their eyes, I said to myself again that we would definitely return to our homes. And, of course, we will restore these places so that these people who suffered for so many years, many of them did not live to see this happy day, they died longing for their homes, so that those who have survived them live happily and those who did not live to see this day have their souls in paradise.

-Thank you very much!

-Thank you!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish Haber Global TV channel

12.10.2020 [12:10]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by Turkish Haber Global TV channel.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

- Welcome to Haber Global TV channel. We have an extremely important guest. As you know, Azerbaijan is waging a patriotic war. There is a rapid but sustained advancement of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan on the battlefield. A ceasefire, tense diplomatic processes, especially after the attacks Armenia committed yesterday, immediately after the announcement of the ceasefire, activity on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. All, of course, is closely watched by President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev who has agreed to talk to us today despite the tensions. Welcome, Mr. President.

- Thank you.

- First of all, I would like to start with yesterday's attack, the latest situation on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. On the one hand, we know that you are carrying out intense diplomatic activities. Thank you again for taking the time to talk to us despite such a busy schedule. Yesterday we saw the reaction to the attack on your civilian population. However, a completely different approach is observed in foreign media, a kind of propaganda war of the diaspora. First of all, what is the current situation like?

- Of course, we have been facing black propaganda for many years. There are several reasons for this, one of which is the activity of Armenian diaspora organizations in some countries. Azerbaijan is the target of this activity. Their agenda always includes such goals as denigrating Azerbaijan, spreading lies about Azerbaijan and, thus, undermining the image of our country.

Armenian diaspora organizations and their patrons, Armenians of the world have unleashed an information war against Azerbaijan in connection with the recent battles. As a result of that, distorted information is often published in world media these days. Therefore, we must make great effort to communicate Azerbaijani realities to the world community. In this regard, I want to express my special gratitude to representatives of the Turkish media, because leading TV channels and other media outlets in Turkey circulate the truth about this conflict to the world every day, day and night.

It is possible to say that immediately after the introduction of the ceasefire, Armenia continued its vile actions. We paused for a while because we are true to our word. Since a ceasefire was announced, we were hoping that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue would be resolved politically because we thought that the military stage was over, the aggressor had learned its lesson on the battlefield and would now take into account the realities and show a positive approach at the diplomatic level. Unfortunately, we did not see that and the ceasefire, which came into force at 12 o'clock, was violated by Armenia.

As you know, a horrific crime was committed against civilians on the following night. The city of Ganja was bombed. The city came under fire with "Tochka-U" missiles, as a result of which civilians were killed and injured. This is another manifestation of the ugly face of Armenian fascism.

Armenians of the world, Armenia's supporters, their benefactors and Islamophobic circles will no longer be able to conceal this crime because everything is already obvious. There were statement for the press at the scene yesterday and representatives of foreign embassies who are visiting the site today see everything with their own eyes. Once again, they see who is causing this conflict, who pursues an aggressive policy, who is committing crimes against the civilian population. The Armenian state is a state of terror, a fascist state, and this crime against humanity has shown this once again.

- The factor you have just mentioned is very important. We have worked in many areas where Turkey is fighting terrorism. For example, the PKK subjected our cities to rocket and artillery fire. We knew that this was the work of a terrorist organization. I said this in our broadcast yesterday – an action that is incompatible with humanity, conscience and logic. Earlier in your address to the people, you said that you were receiving calls, in particular, from Russia, asking for a ceasefire. The ceasefire has been reached, but then with what logic and why is this attack being carried out? How would you answer this question?

- First of all, we must take into account the terrorist nature of Armenia because they are being defeated, they are losing on the battlefield. The victorious Azerbaijani Army achieves new military successes every day. Either a city or a village is liberated from occupation almost every day, or the territory of these villages is taken under control. Today I can say that several settlements are now fully under our control. We simply haven't entered these settlements yet because there is no need for that from a military point of view. But we will make further announcements after some time. Therefore, Armenia is being defeated in all directions of the front, and this being the case, it wants to avenge its pain and defeat on civilians. This is their nature. The perpetrators of the Khojaly genocide have now carried out an attack on Ganja.

The military-political leadership of Armenia is guilty of the attack on Ganja. According to the information we have, this decision was made personally by Pashinyan. We have accurate information that Pashinyan is currently experiencing very severe psychological upheavals. His moral and psychological state is very tense and he makes inappropriate decisions. For example, they have made several attempts to re-occupy Hadrut. This morning, I was informed that last night a large group of commandos who arrived from Armenia tried to re-occupy Hadrut although from a strategic point of view, this is not particularly important for Armenia – just to take a selfie there and report to its population. The Azerbaijani Army neutralized this unit, and the losses Armenia suffered there that night are exclusively victims of Pashinyan's irresponsible and predatory policies.

This is their tactic, as they are accustomed to the fact that they will always be supported on the world stage. Unfortunately, the world's Armenians, their patrons, Islamophobic circles have the most powerful positions in the world. They have always supported Armenia and their aggressive policy against us, defended them. They spread utter lies about Azerbaijan, tried to portray Azerbaijanis as aggressors. But today, in the age of the Internet, it is very difficult for them to do this because there are already non-traditional media outlets, there is the Internet, and communicating information is not very difficult. Therefore, they no longer have the same positions in the information war now. We are on the right track. We are right in terms of both international law and historical justice. We are on our own land, we are fighting on our own land. If Armenian soldiers leave our lands, then this conflict will also end.

- You have mentioned the international community. The West did not express a particular reaction to this attack. Did you expect a protest? During the meeting held by Mr. Hajiye with the attachés yesterday, we also witnessed such a picture. He said three times: ask questions and we will answer and explain to you the real state of affairs. No answer.

- We didn't really expect anything, and there is no need for that because over the years we have seen that they do not want to hear the truth or try to disguise it, distort information and real facts. There are many reasons for that. Therefore, our main goal was to resolve this issue, restore historical justice and our territorial integrity. We have enough strength to do this.

Of course, the support provided from the very first days, from the very first hours by fraternal Turkey, the clear statements of my brother, esteemed President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as well as statements of other high-ranking officials provided Azerbaijan with moral support and also showed the whole world that Turkey is next to Azerbaijan. Otherwise, this conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan could cover a wider geography.

- Do you expect a sustainable ceasefire? It is constantly violated although it was reached after 11 and a half hours of negotiations in Moscow. Yesterday, we, journalists, witnessed that Baku is showing great patience.

- Yes, we are showing patience. Of course, after such a barbaric shelling of Ganja, every Azerbaijani is outraged and an adequate response is required. But we are giving an answer on the battlefield. We avenged yesterday's victims on the battlefield. Our attitude is this: we have never fought and are not fighting civilians. This is one of the qualities that distinguish Azerbaijan from Armenia. Therefore, in order to ensure a sustainable ceasefire, Armenia must, first of all, understand that they will no longer see the lands liberated from occupation and will not return there. For them, this is completely impossible. Whatever they say and whatever support they have, this will not happen. We came to these lands, these are the lands of our ancestors. No force can drive us out of there. The sooner they understand this, the better for them because for a lasting ceasefire to be reached, both sides must be committed to it. We are committed to it. We observed the ceasefire, which came into force at noon, but when we saw that Armenia was violating it,

naturally, we could not but react. We have to protect ourselves. Thus, it is possible to say that the ceasefire entered into force but did not happen in real life.

- Are you receiving signals to retreat, at least at this point, from your lands?

- No, we are not receiving such signals and no-one can give us such signals. This is contrary to international law and historical justice. There were no such signals. There have been signals to stop. There have been signals not to move forward anymore. There have been signals to ensure a ceasefire. And we say: well, let there be a ceasefire, but in parallel it is necessary to resolve the issue peacefully.

I believe that the agreements reached in Moscow fully meet our interests, because, first of all, it provides for the exchange of bodies of those killed in the action and prisoners on a humanitarian basis. We wanted this from day one. But Armenia did not go for it. There are also other very important political moments. One of them is the restoration of negotiations, discussions, continuation of substantive negotiations based on fundamental principles. And the fundamental principles meet our interests, because they provide for a withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the occupied lands. It is stated in them that the Armenian armed forces will withdraw from five districts at the first stage and from two more at the second stage. After that, of course, all internally displaced persons will return to the places where they lived before. This means that our internally displaced persons will return to both Shusha and Khankandi, after which a political solution to this issue can be provided.

Another issue – Armenia has always had a negative attitude to this – is that the format of the negotiations remains unchanged. The Armenian leadership and prime minister Pashinyan have always said that Azerbaijan should negotiate with the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh republic”. But we were opposed to this. The inclusion of such an item there is also in our interests.

Therefore, there are already all the possibilities and all the grounds for the transition from a military stage to the diplomatic and political stage. As for the issue of Armenia's observance of the ceasefire, I hope that the new successful operations of the victorious Azerbaijani Army yesterday and this night will force them to do so.

- Since 27 September, when this patriotic war began, you have been talking about the possibility of resolving this issue within the framework of a new format, with more active participation of Turkey, that this issue can be resolved jointly by Russia and Turkey. But Lavrov's statement did not mention Turkey. It followed from his statement that the negotiations would again be continued within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group in the future. In what way and when will Turkey be at the negotiating table? Has this been spoken about?

- Of course, this is our position. I have said this many times. I want to reiterate that Turkey must definitely play an active role in the political settlement of this issue. I also know that some Turkish media outlets are wondering why Turkey was not in Moscow. Naturally, this was not envisaged at the current stage. Neither was Turkey faced with such a task. This is not a process of negotiations. This is just a ceasefire on a humanitarian basis. In other words, it was not an event organized for negotiations. So far, negotiations have been conducted within the framework of the Minsk Group. However, these negotiations have been ineffective and have yielded no result. For nearly 30 years, we have not received a single centimeter of our lands back through negotiations. Therefore, I also said quite correctly that the Minsk Group was established in 1992, and we have no information about the basis on which it was established. If you look at the composition of the Minsk Group, you can see that it also includes countries located far from this region, which have no connection with it and have never been interested in the conflict. Their presence here a formality. Well, if we want to resolve this conflict – and we do want this – then there must be countries that would have both strength and influence and this composition should not be one-sided. Notice the activities of Armenian diasporas in the countries that are now co-chairs of the Minsk Group now. In all three countries, Armenian diaspora organizations have great political influence. Thanks to these political opportunities, they influence the officials of these countries. So how fair is it? Why shouldn't Turkey also be a co-chair? It is already a member of the Minsk Group. Therefore, our policy is quite logical and we have a result-oriented approach.

Geopolitical realities have changed. The situation in 1992 cannot be compared to the current situation. Turkey today is a powerhouse not only in the region but also on a global scale. Many in the West do not want to accept this. This annoys them. They are used to the fact that, unfortunately, their words sometimes had a high value in Turkish politics last century. But Turkey is pursuing an absolutely independent policy today and has turned into a force to reckon with on a global scale. What issue can be

resolved in our region without Turkey? Look, Turkey has its say in Syria, Libya, the Middle East, our region, and this is a reality. It must be reckoned with.

I cannot say when the negotiations will begin, but since Armenia is violating the current ceasefire, I do not believe that it will be sincere in the negotiations. In any case, de jure or de facto, Turkey must definitely participate in the settlement of this problem. It is already participating because it is no secret that we hold regular consultations with Turkey. Since the beginning of these processes, since 27 September to the present, we have been in constant contact. High-ranking representatives of Turkey are in close contact with the heads of state and government of many countries. Therefore, it is already a reality. We just have to turn de facto reality into de jure reality.

- You have said, “why shouldn't Turkey be in the system of co-chairmanship, it should be”. I will ask for more clarity but quote you. Earlier, in your address to the people, you used such expressions, “we have changed the status quo, the line of contact is no longer there, we have broken it”. Could you please dwell in detail both on Turkey's participation in the new negotiations and on these words of yours, what did you mean? What status quo will be created by Baku from now on?

- You know, for many years, we made great effort to get a statement from co-chairs in this regard. Finally, about seven to eight years ago, several statements were made at the level of the presidents of America, Russia and France that the status quo is unacceptable and must be changed. We welcomed that. I have also stated several times in this regard that this is a very positive approach. In other words, it means that Armenian armed forces must leave our lands. Armenia should change the status quo because we have not occupied Armenian lands. How can we change the status quo? This became a kind of message, a signal to Armenia. Unfortunately, this and other statements – there have been several – hung in the air. What did we hear after that? Recently, the co-chairs backed down from these words. What are they saying now? They are saying that the status quo is not sustainable. But there is a big difference here. The status quo must be changed, i.e. Armenia must leave our lands. The status quo is not sustainable, i.e. it is unstable, which means that they simply state this as a fact. This being the case, Azerbaijan changed the status quo itself, on the battlefield. The status quo is gone. The settlements and villages of Aghdara, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Hadrut have already been liberated. What status quo can we talk about now? None. Line of contact? It is gone. It is clear that the existing line of contact was created on the basis of deep military knowledge. Armenia did not have any military knowledge at that time. This must be admitted openly. The low authority of Armenia creates a very serious problem for them. For them, the line of contact had to be very short and straight. And this was done. They are smart enough for that. This was done by their advisers. If you look at the old line of contact, you will see that it has a horizontal-vertical shape. Like this, a smooth one. In other words, it is very easy to defend it. Their positions were mainly based on the hills. It was very difficult to take them, to destroy fortifications. Now there is no line of contact. We broke through it from several directions – from the north, from the south and then from the east. What line of contact can we talk about now? It is gone! The salvation mission of the Azerbaijani Army continues. We liberate new positions every day. It doesn't matter if these positions are a village or a city. Let there be a hill, a mountain – they are more important than a village or a city. We will return to the cities anyway. The main task for us is to occupy strategic heights. Today, all the neighborhoods of Hadrut are under our control. The city is also ours. A completely different question is whether to enter the city or not. At present, we are not faced with the political task of declaring the liberation of one place today and another tomorrow. No! In some cases, we liberate villages and towns and announce that after a day or two. This tactic also exists.

Let me say again: there is no status quo and there is no line of contact. There is no myth about an invincible army the Armenians had been inventing over the years. We showed who is who. Therefore, these realities must be taken into account by Armenia, its patrons and the whole world. Those who tell us to “stop” should know: well, we can stop, we do not want bloodshed either, but after that a political process must begin. If the political process does not start, we will not stop. I said that we would go all the way. To the end. But how? In military or political ways? This is another question. We want the military stage to end, so that no blood is shed, there are no martyrs and we liberate our lands peacefully.

- The political and military side of the issue is one thing. Today, more precisely from the moment we arrived in Baku, we have met with people who were forced to leave these places. Among them were people from both Khojaly and Jabrayil. We visited the villages built by the Azerbaijani state, by you. Everyone we met is filled with a sense of gratitude to you and to the state. They say, “we live here, we do not need anything, but we want to return to our lands.” The people of Jabrayil,

answering the question, “What will you do on the lands liberated from the occupation?”, told us, “Just let there be a roof over our heads and that would be enough for us.” What will you do for these people? Will there be new construction work on these lands?

- We will build not only roofs there, we will build entire cities, we will return life to those places. We will restore all the destroyed places. Today they are under the control of our army. Some of the liberated lands are already being visited by representatives of our media. In others, our servicemen shoot videos themselves. We can see that there is not a single building there. In other words, these are the actions of the fascists. The world must and will see this. Look at the state of Aghdam and Fuzuli today. They have destroyed all our villages. They thought the Azerbaijanis would never return there. But they have no idea about the determination of the Azerbaijani people. We have rebuilt Jojug Marjanly in just about eight months. The village, which we liberated from occupation in 2016, was rebuilt in six to eight months. People live there today, there is gas, water, electricity, a mosque, a hospital, a school, houses – everything. In addition, we provided them with agricultural equipment and this village has revived. We must turn all this land into paradise. The nature there is already like paradise, and even though these lands were under the heel of the Armenians for many years, they will be reborn. Life, children's laughter and people's smiles will return there. The citizens of Azerbaijan will live on these lands with dignity.

Our internally displaced persons know that their problem is the number one problem for me, for the President. You, too, know how much help we provide. This year, we will provide 7,000 families with new apartments. About 35,000 people receive free housing from the state every year. The state pays them a monthly allowance. Therefore, of course, they are satisfied with the care of the state. In our meetings, they always express their gratitude and say: everything is fine here, we live in new houses, we have not seen such conditions, but please take us back there, we want to go there. And they will go.

Therefore, we must work on plans for the development of these regions now. Relevant instructions have already been given. Planning will be carried out for the population of Azerbaijan to return to these regions and settle there as soon as possible.

- Mr. President, thank you very much for meeting with us despite such a tight schedule and diplomatic tensions.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish Haber Türk TV channel

13.10.2020 [12:10]

As reported, on 13 October, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish Haber Türk TV channel. On 14 October, the TV channel broadcast the interview with the head of state. AZERTAC presents the interview.

- We are with the President of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev. Mr. President, you have a busy schedule, both at the front and in diplomacy. Thank you very much for your time with Haber Türk.

- Thank you.

- Mr. President, a meeting between Armenia and Azerbaijan took place in Moscow, which lasted 11 and a half hours. But after that meeting, Armenia bombarded the city of Ganja and targeted civilians with particular cruelty. It is noteworthy here that Armenia aims at Azerbaijan from its own territory. Why did Armenia need this attack at a time when the meeting was held at the diplomatic level? Have you received the desired support from the world community or any messages on this issue?

- This dirty policy of Armenia is understandable because they resort to such heinous actions whenever they are defeated on the battlefield. The display of cruelty towards civilians and unarmed population is a common thing for them. The Azerbaijani people saw this on the example of the Khojaly genocide. This time the Azerbaijani Army, having carried out a successful operation along the entire front, liberated several cities and villages. Our operation to liberate us from the occupation continues successfully. This morning, I was informed that the Azerbaijani Army has achieved even more impressive successes in this direction. We will provide this information at the right time.

The reason for this treacherous attack by Armenia is that they are trying to expand the geography of this conflict and involve the Collective Security Treaty Organization of which they are a member. This is why they bombard Azerbaijani lands, civilians and provoke us to retaliate. But as I said, our revenge would be on the battlefield. We never take any action against civilians. All our goals are military. From the first days of the operation, military targets were reviewed again and we eliminated them with precise and aimed fire. The Armenian army suffered a lot of damage. We have destroyed more than 200 tanks, two S-300 anti-aircraft installations, numerous other pieces of equipment. A total of 33 tanks and other hardware have been taken as trophies.

This is another terrorist act on the part of Armenia, but it cannot break the will of the Azerbaijani people. We will fight the enemy with even greater determination, we will liberate our lands with even greater zeal, and we will raise the flag of Azerbaijan in all the occupied lands.

As for the reaction of international organizations and the international community to this, as always, Turkey has openly and unequivocally supported us on this issue again. The statements of my dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the statements of other high-ranking officials were further manifestation of the position of brotherhood. Pakistan and its Prime Minister have made a very positive statement, showing great solidarity. Other countries have made similar statements. But I can't say that it was widespread on a global scale. However, it is as clear as day. A statement is made about a ceasefire, but such a cowardly attack is organized less than a day later. This shows yet again who is not interested in a ceasefire.

I said that our goal is to return the citizens of Azerbaijan to all the occupied lands. I said that the ceasefire would allow things to move from a military onto political and diplomatic levels. At the diplomatic level, this issue should be resolved around the negotiating table, Armenia should withdraw from the other occupied territories, Azerbaijani citizens should return there and peace should be established. But it seems that Armenia's plans were completely different. They believed that by using this ceasefire, they could reduce their military losses, gain time, mobilize new forces and thus continue their attacks on Azerbaijan. They were wrong. I said that if Armenia did not act positively, they would regret it, and I was right.

- Mr. President, your Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Armenian foreign minister held a meeting that lasted 11 and a half hours. When this meeting was underway, you said that you have one condition – they should provide a timetable, in other words, a timetable for Armenia's withdrawal from Karabakh. Was the timetable provided at the Moscow meeting? Did Moscow submit any project or plan related to the future of Karabakh?

- No, the timetable was not provided, but we did not particularly insist on that because we were satisfied with the provisions of the Moscow agreement, the Moscow statement that met our interests. I should also say that the Moscow discussions dragged on because there were plans to include articles that did not suit us in this statement. We didn't know about that. When our foreign minister arrived in Moscow and sat down at the negotiating table, proposals were presented to both ministers. Naturally, I was informed as we were in constant contact. I set out our conditions outside of which no arrangements were possible.

This is why, given the situation, we have slightly softened our position in relation to the timetable. But this does not mean that there will be no timetable. There will be one. When? This will be established during the discussions. It was indicated in the statement that the discussions would be resumed on the basis of the fundamental principles, i.e. the Madrid principles, which confirm the return of our occupied lands to Azerbaijan. At the same time, the format of negotiations remains unchanged. In particular, negotiations will be held between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The participation of any representative of the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic" in these talks is not negotiable. We are satisfied with that. Our expectation was that negotiations should start immediately and the timetable should be presented to us within these negotiations. We must be satisfied with this timetable. In other words, it cannot be a long process. We have waited for 30 years. The patience of the Azerbaijani people has already run out. I am sure that if negotiations resume, this timetable will be provided to us. However, the violation of this agreement, of this statement on the part of Armenia shows that they simply intend to gain time and continue attacks on Azerbaijan.

- Mr. President, Armenia is making attempts related to the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia is trying to solicit political pressure from France, Russia and other countries with a strong Armenian diaspora. You are taking a decisive position on the issue of liberating Karabakh from occupation. What is your model related to Karabakh after its liberation? Will it be an autonomous region or an independent entity? What will be the process related to Karabakh like?

- First of all, I have to say that the attempts currently being made by Armenia are inappropriate and very harmful for themselves because no country will ever grant independence to Nagorno-Karabakh, which is an integral part of Azerbaijan and belongs to it from the point of view of international law. No country will recognize it. This being the case, all such attempts will be fruitless. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is recognized by the whole world. Notice that the Minsk Group co-chair countries recognize our territorial integrity. We have initiated a document entitled "Partnership Priorities" with the European Union. It expresses support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of our borders. So I do not believe that any country will recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh because an hour later we will cut off all diplomatic ties with such a country. Definitely! Therefore, all attempts by Armenia are designed simply for the internal audience, i.e. its own public, as if they are engaged in some kind of diplomatic activity too.

As for the post-war period, there will be no changes in our position. Our position is based on historical justice, international law and best international experience. In other words, at the first stage the Armenian armed forces must withdraw from the occupied territories. In principle, this issue has already been reaffirmed within the Minsk Group – five districts, then two districts, then Nagorno-Karabakh itself, Shusha, Khankandi – the Azerbaijanis lived in many villages there. Azerbaijani citizens must return there and discussions on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh in a new environment, in a new climate will be continued. We will get even closer to peace. Therefore, there is no change in our position on the Armenians living there. Azerbaijan is a multiethnic state. Thousands of Armenians live in different parts of Azerbaijan, especially in Baku, and they are our citizens. There are many ethnicities living in our country and this increases the strength of our country. Therefore, the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh should not be worried at all. Once we save their lives from that criminal junta, they will live better, safer, in a more secure environment and their well-being will improve because they live in poverty now. We will invest in it, we will implement social programs there, we will have programs to create jobs. All this will be a new stage for the Armenians living there and the Azerbaijanis who will return there.

This is our position. And Armenia's position is to expel the Azerbaijanis from there, carry out ethnic cleansing, raze the historical and religious sites of Azerbaijan to the ground, and then declare that this is ancient Armenian land. The Armenians were resettled there by tsarist Russia at the beginning of the 19th century. This is history. We know this history. Therefore, this is our position. The Azerbaijani people know and support this position.

- Mr. President, as far as I understand, you have explained not only the operation but also the period after it, provided a phased concept. However, we know that during the conflict, sad events took place in Karabakh, 30,000 Azerbaijani Turks were killed, became martyrs. Will the two peoples be able to live together again in this geographic space? Or will Armenians and Azerbaijani Turks live in separate districts? What is the plan?

- You know, the Azerbaijani people are very kind. That is exactly why representatives of dozens of other ethnicities live in Azerbaijan peacefully and with dignity. Therefore, I am absolutely convinced that Armenians and Azerbaijanis will be able to live together in these regions. Just like they live in other places of Azerbaijan today, just like, for example, they live in Georgia. More than 300,000 Azerbaijanis and about 200,000 Armenians live in Georgia. In some villages, they live together, in the same village. There are no problems between them. They live like normal neighbors – in Russia, in Ukraine and other countries. Why can't we do it here?

I believe that we must be ready for that. We must prepare our peoples for this. Everything I have told you today is accepted by the Azerbaijani people and receives their support. At the same time, this is my appeal to the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh today. Let them know that the Azerbaijani people are not their enemy. The Azerbaijani people simply want to live in the land of their ancestors. They have the right to do so. Let them live there alongside us. But to drive us out of there so that they could live there on their own is unfair. We can never agree to that.

Of course, any war ends in peace. Therefore, we must also look at the post-war stage now. If both sides show a firm will and international organizations help us in this matter, then I think this can be achieved. It won't be easy but we must try to achieve this.

- Mr. President, Armenia is currently shelling the settlements of Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan takes aim only at military sites in the course of operations, conducts operations only in the territories of the Karabakh region. At the same time, Armenia is shelling Ganja, Mingachevir, Barda and other places with dense population centers. What is the goal: to sow panic, chaos and fear? What is the psychological state of the Azerbaijani people at the present time?

- You are right, the goal is exactly this – to sow panic, chaos and fear. Azerbaijan is a completely different country today. A new generation has grown up. New people have been raised in the conditions of independence – patriots, both morally and physically strong. At the same time, the older generation has a completely different world outlook today. Our state has a strong determination. We have a powerful army. That is why the heinous attacks failed to break our resolve. The city of Tartar suffered the most from the Armenian vandalism. Thousands of shells fell on Tartar. Tartar is a small town. Not as big as Ganja. I was informed this morning that from 7 o'clock to half past 9, over a thousand shells fell on the city of Tartar in two and a half hours. But the people of Tartar stand as firmly as a mountain, united in a single fist, do not go anywhere and say: we will die but we will not retreat. The same holds true for Aghdam, Goranboy, Aghjabadi and all other regions located close to the frontline. They are used to living face to face with the enemy. In 2016, after the famous April battles, I went to the regions affected by Armenian vandalism. I visited one village. The distance from that village to Armenian positions was 100-150 meters. Our servicemen told me: don't go there, don't go, it is dangerous there. I replied that our people live there, isn't it dangerous for them? Imagine how brave and proud these people are to live there, create and raise children under enemy fire. Such are Azerbaijani people!

So these treacherous attacks will not force us to deviate from the chosen path. Another goal of Armenia is to stop us. They think these mean strikes will stop us. Nobody can stop us because our cause is fair. We are going along this path and we are following it successfully. We raise our flag, free our lands and we will go all the way to the end!

- Mr. President, regarding the Minsk Group. Although the conflict has been going on for 30 years, no solution has been found. Yesterday, in an interview with one of the media, you spoke about the possibility of revising the format, more precisely, the possibility of changing the composition. What should this composition be like? Should Turkey get a seat at the negotiating table? The fact is that a message came from Russia in the morning that they did not really want Turkey's presence at this table. What is your attitude to this issue? I would like to ask you another question in this regard. Mr. President, if Russia wants to send peacekeepers to Karabakh, how will you react to this? If I am not mistaken, one of the media outlets has already asked you this question.

- First of all, I must say that the dispatch of peacekeepers to the region should take place on the basis of the consent of both countries – Armenia and Azerbaijan. The dispatch and composition of peacekeepers. In other words, who will be there and what countries they will represent. If one of the countries vetoes it, then, of course, this will not happen. The second question is that everyone should understand: when people talk about sending peacekeepers today, they talk about Azerbaijani lands, the territory of sovereign Azerbaijan. Without our permission, no country will be able to send its peacekeepers to our lands. This is against the law. This runs counter to international law. This is unacceptable.

Therefore, we are not worried about that. There may be such efforts and intentions. I do not rule that out but all questions should be decided at the table. I must also say that the fundamental principles that are the topic of discussion envisage the dispatch of peacekeepers at the final stage. First of all, it is necessary to resolve the issues I have noted - the liberation of our lands, the return of internally displaced persons, the opening of borders, the establishment of transport and trade communications. After that, the dispatch of peacekeepers is not ruled out. But since we have not come close to a positive result in the 30 years of negotiations, this issue was not discussed at all. So there may be various assumptions and interests on this issue but it is impossible without Azerbaijan's consent.

As for the question related to the activities of the Minsk Group, I have already said several times that the Minsk Group was established in 1992. We do not know what groundwork there was at the time. There are countries in this group that are not interested in this region at all. They have no interests and no influence in this region. Therefore, if they want a solution to this conflict – we do want this – then there must be countries that could contribute to peace in real life.

Of course, we see fraternal Turkey in this process. We welcome this. We know that the Minsk Group was established by the OSCE, which has its own rules. There are probably some legal procedures involved in changing the composition of this group. We don't want to go too much into detail. Therefore, I said that it did not matter whether this would be de jure or de facto – the main thing is that Turkey should be at this table. It is already there because my dear brother, dear Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has repeatedly met and talked with respected Putin about the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. For many years now, i.e. for more than 10 years, this issue has been on the Turkish-Russian agenda. I am aware of this. Both the President of Turkey and the President of Russia told me about this. Turkey is already there. There is an even larger volume, an even larger scale now.

You know, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu, speaks on the phone with Mr. Lavrov, the Turkish Defense Minister Mr. Hulusi Akar, speaks with Mr. Shoigu. Who can say that Turkey is not in the process. If there is no Turkey, then why are you saying this? Turkey is there. And we will do everything possible to keep it this way because this issue cannot be resolved without Turkey's participation. Everyone should understand this. As for the formal side of the issue, I repeat that the Minsk Group may remain, it has not achieved any result in 30 years anyway. But the sooner this issue is resolved, the sooner the Minsk Group will become unnecessary.

- Mr. President, on the one hand, the prime minister of Armenia Pashinyan danced in Shusha before the operation and tried to cheer up his people. On the other hand, suffering defeats in this war, he began to blame Turkey. He accused Turkey of transferring foreign fighters here. At the same time, we see that international media also devote a lot of attention to this topic. Among other things, one of the American newspapers circulated reports about foreign fighters and Turkish planes in Azerbaijan. How do you assess that dance of Pashinyan? Is the current situation obvious? Secondly, I would like to know your opinion regarding Turkey's position and the topic of these aircraft.

- Pashinyan's dance in a drunken stupor and his other insults aroused legitimate anger among the Azerbaijani people. We are avenging these escapades of his on the battlefield. Azerbaijani soldiers are showing on the battlefield who is right and who is not. We demonstrate our power, the will of the people on the battlefield. Pashinyan's other provocations also do not and will not remain unanswered. The dignity of the Azerbaijani people is being restored. The blood of our martyrs does not and should not remain unavenged. The cities and villages we have already liberated are our best response to the likes of Pashinyan. He already understands who is who. I warned him. I told him that this path would lead them to disaster. I told him not to play with the dignity of the Azerbaijani people, to be attentive and careful. He thought that Armenians of the world would protect him. He thought that big states would fight in his place, and he still wants it today. In the course of one day, he telephoned the President of Russia, esteemed Vladimir Putin, several times. Some of these calls were reported on in the media, others were not. We have information that

even after the latest ceasefire, Pashinyan called Putin. These actions of his, of course, demonstrate that this person is in panic, he is confused. The Azerbaijani army is inflicting such a crushing blow on the enemy that they have found themselves in an awkward state. This is one side of the issue.

As for the involvement of Turkey here or the transfer of some foreign forces, this is an absolute lie. I have already expressed my attitude to the issue related to the Turkish F-16. Turkish F-16 aircraft are here. They flew here during the exercises, stayed here afterwards and after the Armenian attacks. But they are on the ground, not in the air. None of them took part in this war. Not a single person from Turkey participates in this war. As for foreigners, this is also a lie. This is slander. We were not provided with any evidence. There were just statements from France and Russia, and that was all.

- Has any specific evidence been provided?

- There is no evidence. No statements were made. Our intelligence is not informed of anything.

I can tell you now that our intelligence agencies contacted the countries that slandered us and asked for evidence. They did not give any. Only words. Let them write whatever they want in the media, we are not concerned. Western media have always been on the side of Armenia. They treated us negatively before. Therefore, we are used to this kind of slander. But statements of certain officials are unacceptable. Either prove it or take your words back. This is not the case. And this is not necessary. Azerbaijan has a strong enough army to resolve these issues on its own.

Besides, as for the participation of foreign citizens, let them look at Armenia and see how many terrorists there are there. There are RKK camps there. They also exist in Nagorno-Karabakh. After the liberation of this region from the invaders, we will destroy these camps too. So many foreigners are taking part in these battles against us today. The terrorists killed there have passports of Canada and Lebanon. Whether they are of Armenian origin or not is another matter. A citizen of another country has come here and is fighting against us. They are mercenaries.

They also say that Turkey is providing military assistance to Azerbaijan. You know, Turkey is our brother. Our fraternal relations have already gone through great trials. We buy military equipment from Turkey, but we also buy it from other countries. We buy it from Russia, Israel, Belarus, Iran, Ukraine, Eastern European countries, including Turkey. Turkey has a developed military-industrial complex today. Why shouldn't we buy it from them? Notice what Armenia is doing. We buy everything with money. I have a complete list and it will be published later, but I want to draw your attention to several issues. During these two weeks, more than 200 Armenian tanks were destroyed and 33 tanks were taken as trophies. In other words, we have destroyed 233 Armenian tanks. Two S-300 installations were destroyed. Everyone knows the cost of each one. In addition, the OSA-35 air defense systems were destroyed. "TOR", "KUB", "KRUG", trucks, anti-tank weapons. If you count all this, the cost of equipment we have destroyed and taken as trophies is estimated at 1-2 billion dollars. The question is where poor Armenia found the money to buy all this. Did it buy it with money? No! They received it for free. Everyone knows who gave it to them. They give and continue giving them weapons. After the clashes in Tovuz District, the conflict ended on 16 July and starting from 17 July cargo planes began delivering weapons to Armenia every day. Are these items in Armenia's budget? No! Armenia's foreign exchange reserves amount to \$1.5 billion. That's all. It has no more money. The external public debt of this country is approximately \$8 billion. So it is a failed state. Where does so much of destroyed equipment come from? And much more equipment will be destroyed. If the war continues, we will destroy their entire army, all of their army! Therefore, the sooner they stop the war, the more tanks and guns they will be able to save. There is so much more of this on the territory of Armenia. Russia has a military base in Armenia and there are 5,000 soldiers there. Does Turkey have a military base in Azerbaijan? No! Armenia's border with Iran and Turkey is protected by Russian border guards. Are there Turkish border guards on the border of Azerbaijan? No! So no-one should accuse us. Otherwise, we will have to reveal all the unpleasant moments.

- Mr. President, you have mentioned RKK camps in Karabakh. Is there information in what districts they are located?

- We have intelligence about this. I don't want to talk about this in more detail. Most of all, they are present in mountainous regions. A part of the occupied territories is in the mountains and a part is in the lowland. Most of all, they are located in forests and mountainous areas. We have repeatedly contacted international organizations in this regard. Even when I was in my previous capacity, as a Member of Parliament and head of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I raised the issue there too. I drew the attention of European parliamentarians to the fact that they should

apply sanctions to Armenia. Armenia is a terrorist country, a country that encourages terror. Therefore, this kind of intelligence is available. At the same time, this was confirmed in a statement of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. For some reason, this statement was not published in any media. It said that foreigners were fighting in Azerbaijan. Even though Armenia is not mentioned in that statement, it says that RKK is also involved in the battles. It is clear that there can be no RKK in Azerbaijan. Why isn't there a single word about this in the Western media? They want to conceal this, to divert attention from it. But after the flag of Azerbaijan is hoisted on all these lands, not a single terrorist can remain there alive.

- Mr. President, issues of energy security are being discussed today. Armenia has carried out attacks that targeted TANAP or pipelines going to Turkey. How will you ensure security in this direction? Europe needs energy resources. What do European friends think about this?

- They are a little worried. Of course, we take this into account because anything can be expected from Armenia. One of the reasons for the clashes that took place in Tovuz district in July was also to approach this pipeline or to establish control over it. That was why they wanted to enter our territory and occupy new lands. But they experienced the bitterness of defeat. Since 2006, when the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline was put into operation, to this day, there has not been a single problem on the territory of Azerbaijan related to the security of pipelines, not a single one – neither technical nor due to any provocation. Because on the territory of Azerbaijan we have a fairly sophisticated security system. Monitoring, physical protection and electronic protection are carried out. The location of the pipeline deep under the ground provides a certain degree of protection from air attacks, of course. But if Armenia implements these dirty intentions, i.e. plans to put the pipelines out of operation, then the response to their actions will be very tough. We have already warned them about this. I believe that European countries that will receive gas through TANAP next year should also warn them because TANAP is not only our project. It also has other shareholders. TAP has European shareholders. This is a project of exceptional importance for the energy security of Europe. Therefore, we should all be interested in this project not sustaining any damage.

- Mr. President, I want to ask one more question. Pashinyan is confused now. He has endangered not only himself but also the Armenian people. The 3 million people living in Armenia are in danger. Did any of the Armenians living in Europe, some businessmen working there act as an intermediary, saying that the Armenian people are not to blame, he is crazy. Have there been any phone calls from people interested in speaking about that?

- No, we have not received any phone calls or messages in this regard. But this wasn't something unexpected. You know, every leader, every manager must have some experience. Knowledge also matters, but you need experience, managerial experience. The people who have now come to power in some countries have no experience whatsoever. He did not even run a small collective farm. He didn't even manage a small company or a shop. He probably didn't even manage five people. How can he lead a country? It is difficult to lead a country, especially in our region. This is not so difficult in established European countries because there are countries where people do not even know who is leading them. People are not interested in this, they live their own lives, there is an established system, everything is systematized. In our region, a lot depends on the person leading the country – life, security, well-being of people, international authority. Pashinyan is a man from the street. Who was he before? Nobody! A writer, not even a writer but a correspondent for a newspaper. He came from the street and became a leader. What did he do after that? He is leading Armenia into an abyss. Look, there is absolute dictatorship in Armenia today. Criminal cases have been initiated against both ex-presidents. One of them served a couple of years, then he was released, but the criminal case remains open. The other was forbidden to travel outside the country. Two days before these clashes, the chairman of the main opposition party was arrested. Then Pashinyan crushed the Constitutional Court, dissolved it. He blackmailed the chairman of the Constitutional Court, threatened him with arrest and placed his own people there by force. He imprisons journalists and media representatives. One of them went on a hunger strike and died in prison. There are problems in the international arena, with traditional allies. He has created problems with Russia, Belarus and other traditional allies. Now Pashinyan pins most of his hopes on the Collective Security Treaty Organization. In Russian, this organization is called the CSTO. Its Charter says that in the event of an attack on one of the countries from the outside, the other member-countries must save it. But the general secretary of the CSTO was an Armenian, a man of the previous regime. He threw him in jail, thus insulting this organization too. He has done so much. Everyone already knows that Pashinyan is a product of Soros. He is someone

managed by Soros. The source of the coups and "revolutions" that took place in post-Soviet republics is one and the same. Soros has already become a household word. I don't mean only him. Look for photos of Pashinyan with Soros on the Internet. They stand hand in hand, pressed against each other. A disgusting photo. This is who his father is. Therefore, Soros controls him. The events that took place in Armenia are yet another defeat for Soros.

In 2005, they wanted to do the same in Azerbaijan – the Orange Revolution. But I stood in front of them, crushed them, drove them out of here and then closed the Soros foundations. I drove other non-governmental organizations out of here. I said that we know what to do ourselves. Go and make revolutions somewhere else. They settled in Armenia, money started flowing there through non-governmental organizations and people were brought up in that spirit. Today, 90 percent of Pashinyan's team are representatives of Soros, Transparency International, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other similar dirty organizations. Therefore, in an interview with one of the Russian channels the other day, I said that our goal is not to create problems for Pashinyan. The longer he stays in power, the better for us. You know what I mean.

- Mr. President, last question. Frankly, I didn't plan to ask it but I want to ask it as well. How will events develop after this? There is very serious public support from Turkey. In other words, speaking about the public, I mean people, everyone watches your speeches and supports them. I have been in Azerbaijan for 15 days, I have visited Barda, Mingachevir, Ganja. People provide you with tremendous support. Wherever we have been, I ask people, and they say: "Never mind, let my house be destroyed, let my car burn out, that doesn't matter, the main thing is to return Karabakh". Immense support! We see this when we ask each of them a question. Everyone here supports you – both the opposition and the government. How will this process develop now? What do you expect? How long do you think this process will last? You are the son of an experienced father, the son of Heydar Aliyev, the most experienced political figure in the Caucasus and the region. Do you remember what he told you about Karabakh, Turkey and this region?

- You know, we will solve the problems of people whose houses have been destroyed. Let them not be worried. And in the shortest possible time. I remember when Armenia attacked us in April 2016, more than 1,000 houses were destroyed. During my meetings with the owners of these houses, I said: don't worry, we will restore all the houses. About eight months later, I visited them again, I visited Aghdam and other front-line regions, and handed them the keys to their houses.

An earthquake occurred in the city of Shamakhi a year and a half ago, and thousands of houses were destroyed. I went there and said: don't worry, we will restore all the houses. We did that too. There are several houses left, but they will also be restored. About 10 years ago, a flood occurred in our country, a large area remained under water. More than 5,000 houses were destroyed. All of them were restored by the state. My approach is this: if you had a house with an area of 100 square meters, you will get a new one with an area of 120-150 square meters. If you had a shack, then you will get a new beautiful and well-renovated home. Therefore, people who have lost their home and property will receive help. In addition, many people in our villages have also lost their livestock. It was a source of income for them. I have already issued an instruction, they are calculating how many animals have been lost, and this will also be reimbursed. We will definitely resolve this issue. The Azerbaijani people know that they will not apply to any insurance company, that there will be no red tape, that some official will not create problems for them because all this is under my personal control. Everyone knows this, and my instructions will be fulfilled.

These events demonstrate the greatness of the Azerbaijani people again. They say, let my house be destroyed, let my property be gone if only Karabakh is returned. We all live with this idea, everyone. For 30 years, we have lived with this dream, in separation – for 30 years. Wasn't there supposed to be an end to that? We will put an end to this and are doing exactly that.

Therefore, we must only go forward in this matter now. We gave Armenia a chance. We did not have to agree to this ceasefire. We could have said that we disagree. Who could have forced us?! No-one! We agreed to this so that people would not die on this and on the other side. I feel sorry for them too. They are also being driven. Our Ministry of Defense has circulated video footage of Armenian soldiers being chained, chained to iron, to each other's feet so that they do not run away. So many such bodies have been found. This is horror. They are not humans. On top of that, punitive battalions have been following Armenian soldiers in recent days. If someone retreats, then they shoot them on the spot. So there is such atrocity, such fascism.

Since we have lived with this dream, we want to return there, but in a peaceful way. Therefore, we gave Armenia a chance – observe the ceasefire, do not violate it, sit down at the negotiating table, resolve this issue, return our lands to us. We don't need your land. We do not claim the lands of Armenia. I told you that the Armenians can live on where they lived. We have no problems with them. So our policy fully consists in this at the current stage.

As for the post-war period, of course, not only the region but also the whole world will change. It is already changing. Everyone saw our power. We will be reckoned with even more. The role of Azerbaijan in certain regional issues is already very significant, and it will grow further. Of course, the Turkish-Azerbaijani unity will become even stronger. This is vital for both Turkey and Azerbaijan. The unity of Turkey and Azerbaijan brings stability and peace to the region because our intention is to secure our interests.

Turkey plays a very important stabilizing role in the region and in the new geography today. The support my dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan has provided since very first hours of these clashes has maintained stability. Some may not understand this. If it were not for these words, if my brother had not said that Azerbaijan is not alone and that Turkey is next to Azerbaijan, then the situation may have deteriorated. Someone else may have tried to fish in troubled waters here. Therefore, we must now create a new strategic picture, a strategic vision in this region. We have already started thinking about this, but we do not want to get ahead of ourselves. First, we need to solve this job, complete this work, restore our territorial integrity, after which a new period will begin for Azerbaijan, a new period will begin for the region, the balance of forces will change, and I believe that the power of Turkey and Azerbaijan will increase even more.

- Mr. President, thank you very much. You have taken your time despite the busy schedule, in particular when news comes from the frontline. On the other hand, you are in the thick of diplomatic processes. Of course, during the conversation with you, during this interview, I saw again that you are actually very well aware of what is happening in Armenian society. On behalf of Haber Türk, I express to you, Mr. President, my deep gratitude for your time.

- Thank you! Many thanks.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by France 24 TV channel

15.10.2020 [10:49]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by France 24 TV channel. AZERTAC presents the interview.

-Hello and welcome to the France 24 interview. Today brought you from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. I am in the presence of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. President Aliyev, thank you very much for accepting to answer our questions. Of course, I will be asking you about the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Since the ceasefire which was supposed to be a humanitarian truce was signed, there has been continuing violence, continuing acts of war. I'm asking you today, is that ceasefire officially now dead, over and null and void.

-It depends on the behavior of Armenia. Because we are always committed to our responsibility and the decision to announce the ceasefire on humanitarian grounds as you know came from Russia and we supported it. Because I think it was a right decision in order to exchange the bodies of the dead soldiers and also hostages. Also to continue the activity on the negotiation table. Because the declaration which was announced in Moscow actually provided that negotiations will be based on the basic principles. That was always our position. Armenian side always tried to disrupt the process and was trying to introduce new approaches on negotiation table, which we rejected by us, and by the Minsk Group co-chairs. The most important part of the declaration along with other issues was that the format of negotiations will be unchanged. And that's very important because for broad international audience maybe it's not very clear what it means. I will probably give some more information about that. Because for the last two years after the new government in Armenia came to power, one of their activity was to bring the so-called "authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh" to the negotiation table and thus, to change the format. Because for more than 20 years, negotiations are being held between Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of the Minsk Group process. So, the attempts to bring the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh authorities" was an attempt to change the format. So, when both sides commit that the format is unchanged that means that everything just is within the framework of what has been agreed before. We were observing the ceasefire. But as you know Armenia brutally violated it and not only in Ganja. Attack on civilians in Ganja was reflection of their aggressive policy. And also, they everyday violate ceasefire. I was informed this morning that since 7 o'clock to 9 o'clock in the morning they more than 150 times shelled the city of Tartar and Aghdam. And unfortunately, we have one victim today among civilians in Tartar.

-But Azerbaijan has also continued to fire has it not? The world has been seeing pictures of civilians under shelling in Stepanakert inside Nagorno-Karabakh.

-First, since the ceasefire was announced all the shelling from Azerbaijani side was stopped, second we never deliberately attack civilians in any city or village on the occupied territories. Our targets were only military installations. Our military targets have been identified very carefully. Therefore, we only hit those targets which was a threat to the life of our people and our soldiers. But unfortunately, Armenians are using the tactics to install military equipment in the areas of the cities where people live. So, we had to protect ourselves. But since the ceasefire was established we were committed to that but Armenia violated it, so we had to respond.

-So you are saying that there have been no strikes by Azerbaijan since the ceasefire was announced. Even on military targets?

-No, on military targets there have been strikes, we do not deny it. But that's natural, because we have to defend ourselves. Ceasefire cannot be achieved unilaterally. Otherwise, Armenia will get advantage and will achieve its goal and actually what they are trying to do. They are trying to regain back the territories which have been liberated. Particularly, they try to regain back the city of Hadrut, but they failed. My advice to them and I already publicly addressed Armenian leadership and also Armenian people, that they should stop trying to regain what has been liberated back. That will only cause new victims and will lead to bloodshed.

-What about the pictures of bombings on churches inside Nagorno-Karabakh there is not military targets, surely.

-Yes, you are right. We are investigating that issue, I'd like to say that Azerbaijan is a country with a very high level of religious tolerance, which was reflected by all the major international organizations,

including United Nations. During the visit of His Holiness head of the Vatican, Pope Francis to Baku, he publicly declared that the level of intercultural dialogue, interreligious dialogue in Azerbaijan is very high. You have probably seen the Armenian church in the center of Baku, which was restored by us. And we protected it as the heritage of Armenian people. In that church we keep more than 5,000 ancient books in Armenian language. But what Armenia has done to our mosques? What have they done to the mosques of Aghdam, mosque of Fuzuli, mosque of Shusha? They not only almost destroyed them, but they keep animals there. They keep pigs there, thus insulting the feelings of all the Muslims not only us. I am not saying that we did it in revenge, no. We need to investigate this issue, we are not sure about what happened. We have doubts that could have been done by Armenians in order to blame us. If it was done, if it was done by Azerbaijani military units, that was a mistake and we don't have any historical or religious targets among those targets which we have.

-I want to ask you about the diplomatic process now. Mediation has been ongoing with the OSCE Minsk group, the co-chairs at the moment France, US and Russia. Do you think that structure, should remain that France should remain a co-chair in those negotiations?

-We are receiving some contradictory statements and messages from the very beginning of the outbreak. But I think that due to our mutual diplomatic efforts we managed to keep the situation under control. As you know, I received several phone calls from president Macron. And our last conversation was very positive. We are committed to our efforts to find a political solution to the conflict. I was informed that France as a co-chair will remain neutral, because that's the mandate for a co-chair. This morning I was informed that the French foreign minister issued a statement that due to the fact that France is a co-chair of the Minsk Group it must be neutral. We fully support this position and our position always was that all the co-chairs must be neutral. They should not take sides, because it's contradicting their mandate. In a national capacity, every country has allies friends, with some countries more active relations, with some countries less active relations. This is normal and no one is objecting that. But if some countries have a mandate to be a mediator, of course, both sides, I am sure, Armenia and Azerbaijan expects neutrality, and we see this neutrality now. Therefore, I think the issue which you are referring to now is over. So, we have closed that page.

-In previous interviews you've called for an apology from Emmanuel Macron, after his remarks saying that 300 fighters from Syria have been brought to fight for your side. When you last spoke to him, did you speak about this issue-him accusing mercenaries are fighting for your side?

-Yes, of course. Yes, we spoke about that and I was still waiting for evidence. No evidence was presented to me. No evidence was presented to our other officials. I asked the French president to give evidence and to organize contacts between the heads of corresponding state units in order to talk, in order to exchange this information and this contact happened. And I can tell you that no evidence was presented to us. Therefore, if there is no evidence, I think these rumors should also be left back in the history. We don't have mercenaries. This is our official statement. Since the outbreak, already more than two weeks passed, not a single country presented us a single evidence of that. Moreover, we don't need that. We have an army of more than 100 thousand fighters. And what we are doing now on the ground demonstrate that our army is capable to liberate its lands itself.

-France's foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian has said that there is Turkish military involvement which risks internationalization of this conflict. Is he wrong about that?

-Yes, he is wrong about that. Turkish military involvement is another fake news. There is no military involvement of Turkey. We are using Turkish military equipment. This is true. But we are using military equipment of Russia, military equipment of Israel, military equipment of other countries. And we buy this military equipment unlike Armenia which gets it free of charge. Turkey is in no way other than political, is present in the process. There are no Turkish forces, Turkish F-16s are here but they are left here after the joint military training. By the way, last year we had ten joint military trainings with Turkey, including air force. This year due to pandemic, we had only two and it happened that just after the military training this outbreak happened. So we decided to keep F-16 on the ground and they are on the ground. They are not on the air.

-How many Turkish drones are you deploying?

-We have enough in order to achieve our targets. I think that you can understand me that this is the information which I prefer not to disclose.

-But are they making the difference in this conflict?

-Of course, they are very modern, sophisticated weapons and I can tell you, only by the drones which we acquired from Turkey, we destroyed Armenian military equipment worth 1 billion dollars. Only by the drones and of course, we are using other drones as you know from other sources. We are using artillery, we are using broad range of military equipment. But only the drones made the damage to Armenia worth 1 billion dollars. That's a serious damage for them. I wonder, where did they get so much money to buy all this equipment. Probably, they got them free of charge.

-I am afraid we will have to leave it there. So many more questions of course we could ask you, but thank you very much, President Ilham Aliyev for answering our questions today. And thank you at home for watching. Do stay tuned to France-24 for more international news coming right up.

-Thank you.

-Thank you very much. It was very interesting to talk to you.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish NTV TV channel

15.10.2020 [13:37]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by Turkish NTV TV channel.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

- Mr. President, first of all, thank you very much on behalf of NTV. Thank you for receiving us at this historic time, on such important days for both the region and Azerbaijan despite your busy schedule.

- Thank you.

- Mr. President, the first question will be related to the frontline. What territories have been liberated under occupation since 27 September? Good news has been coming in the last two days.

- Yes, the news is coming. It is possible to say that the Azerbaijani Army is conducting successful operations every day. The public is also aware about these operations. Our main goal is to restore our territorial integrity. Therefore, the main goal on the battlefield is also to liberate strategic heights from the invaders and take control of large territories.

The statement I made yesterday made the people of Azerbaijan happy again. Three villages of Fuzuli and five villages of Khojavand districts have been liberated from the invaders. I must also say that we already control strategic heights in the northern, southern and eastern directions.

Our successful operation continues. To date – of course, these numbers change on a daily basis – about 40, perhaps even more settlements, cities and villages – have been liberated from the occupiers. Very soon there will be more good news, great news.

- I think you are close to Khankandi.

- We are currently conducting major operations in the northern and southern directions. As you know, as a result of a successful operation, we have liberated the city of Jabrayil from occupation. Most of the villages of Jabrayil district are already with us. At the same time, we have liberated many villages of Fuzuli district. I am sure that more good news will come from Fuzuli district in the near future. Also, as a result of a successful operation in the northern direction, the settlement of Sugovushan has been liberated from the invaders. It is also of strategic importance because the heights located there allow us the opportunity to control a vast territory. In addition, there is a very important water reservoir. Armenia had also masterminded a water terror against us and more than one hundred thousand hectares of our lands were left without water. We were forced to drill artesian wells. After the reservoir in Sugovushan settlement came under our control, water started to be supplied to a vast territory.

Therefore, we are carrying out the operation gradually and on the basis of a single plan. All goals have been identified. The Armenian side must reckon with this reality and stop the aggression, observe the ceasefire and leave the rest of the land of its own free will, so that no blood is shed, so that the issue is resolved peacefully.

- Mr. President, I would like to ask if it is still possible to talk about a ceasefire? As we can see, Armenia does not observe the ceasefire. During the attack on Ganja, I was also in that region. Apparently, Armenia is not going to observe it. Has this ceasefire reduced the speed of the Azerbaijani army? What can you say about this?

- You know, we made a huge gesture to the mediators because, as you know, from the first days we started receiving messages from various places related to the ceasefire. Naturally, peace has its own rules and war has its own rules and laws. If someone attacks you, you must defend your land and your citizens. As you know, the introduction of a ceasefire is primarily related to humanitarian issues. Certain work has been done in this direction. We have taken very important actions to exchange bodies. We have involved the International Organization of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in this work. Unfortunately, Armenia, taking advantage of the ceasefire, capitalizing on it, launched new attacks on us. It bombed not only the city of Ganja but also our other cities and villages. This is a war crime, an act of terrorism. Armenia as a terrorist country has once again shown its face to the whole world, and on the battlefield too. Following the ceasefire, they wanted to take this opportunity to launch several attacks on Hadrut. They tried to regain control over it. However, they could not do it and lost a lot of manpower and equipment there. Attacks were organized against us in other directions – in Jabrayil district, in the southern direction of Jabrayil along the

Araz River. All these attacks, of course, were suppressed. This shows that Armenia is insincere at the negotiating table too. Therefore, if this dirty policy continues in Armenia, they will regret it. From the first hours of these battles, I appealed to them and the Armenian people. I said: leave these lands in a peaceful way so that blood is not shed and people do not die. Unfortunately, Armenia does not observe this. Today, the main culprit for the fact that the Armenian army is completely defeated on the battlefield is the military-political leadership of Armenia.

- You also spoke about the importance of Turkey's participation in the settlement of the Karabakh problem. Yesterday, after the conversation between Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Putin, Ankara made a statement on the settlement within the framework of the Minsk Group and bilateral relations. However, Sergey Lavrov yesterday objected and said that Turkey and Russia had different positions on the Karabakh issue. What do you think about this? Why does Russia object to Turkey's participation in the process that you support? What would you like to say about this?

- It would be better if you asked them. I would not like to comment on their statements. We simply have to consider the existing realities. These realities, the true situation is that no issue in the region can be resolved without Turkey's participation today. The history of recent years has already shown this. Someone may like it, some may not, but this is a fact, a reality. Of course, Turkey as a neighbor of Azerbaijan, Armenia and another South Caucasian country, Georgia, plays an active role in this region. This is the right of Turkey. This has been the case historically. We know history well.

Therefore, from the first hours of these battles, in order to move this problem from a military onto a political plane, a political process, we expressed a very open and precise position: Turkey must definitely participate in these matters. If this happens, the fighting will end and the peace process will begin very soon. I also said that Turkey was already in this process, as evidenced by yesterday's conversation between Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Putin. In addition, a few days earlier, there were telephone conversations between the foreign ministers, defense ministers of Turkey and Russia. They are discussing the Karabakh issue.

Therefore, our position is that Turkey must be there. The status is already a technical question. De facto Turkey is already present. It is already a member of the Minsk Group. Over the course of 30 years, the Minsk Group has failed to achieve any result and has not contributed to the implementation of four resolutions of the United Nations Security Council for these 30 years. This situation actually led to the freezing of the conflict. Ultimately, however, the attack on us in July of this year, the sending of an Armenian sabotage group to Azerbaijan in August and, finally, a large-scale offensive in September showed that this conflict is not frozen.

We stick to our position and, of course, hope that this issue will soon be resolved at the negotiating table. Turkey must and, I am sure, will play an active role in this issue.

- In the same statement, he said that if the two countries, Azerbaijan and Armenia, agree, then we can send a Russian military observation mission to the line of contact, that is, to the frontline. What is your attitude to this? If such a military observation mission is created, then which countries should be included in it? What can you say about this?

- You know, this issue – the introduction of peacekeeping forces into the region – is enshrined in the fundamental principles. So the fundamental principles include this too. However, this issue should be resolved at the final stage of the process. Considering that the fundamental principles have not been agreed upon and are just a topic of discussion, I don't know how correct it would be to express an attitude to this issue.

In addition, this issue was not discussed in detail between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Therefore, it was not discussed at all who will be part of the peacekeeping forces, which countries would be represented and what the composition will be. Therefore, I believe that in the current circumstances, when the active phase of the conflict is still ongoing, it is a little too premature to talk about this. Of course, the position of Azerbaijan in this matter must and will be taken into account because everyone should know that the conflict is taking place on Azerbaijani lands now. This is our land from the point of view of both international law and historical justice, and it is impossible to send armed forces of another country to Azerbaijan without the consent of Azerbaijan.

- This is why I asked. For example, Turkey and Russia carry out certain cooperation in some parts of Syria. There are military units and observers are on patrol service. If such a format is proposed in the future, what can you say about it?

- I would not like to say anything about this now because I do not want to get ahead of the events. To resolve this or that issue, time must be right and the situation must be ripe. We cannot say when it will happen, we do not know whether it will or will not be the case. One thing is clear: after the end of the military confrontation, naturally, certain international efforts will be needed to ensure peace. What these efforts will consist in, whether they will be political or will they be proposals in the military sphere – we are ready to consider this. Of course, the Azerbaijani population that will return to the liberated territories must live in peace. It is necessary to ensure their safety. Armenia's treacherous attack of Ganja from its territory proves that this terrorist state is capable of doing anything. Therefore, of course, this issue should be discussed on the international plane. However, I cannot say anything about when this will happen.

- Mr. President, there are military agreements with Turkey within a certain framework. How do you view the idea of stationing a Turkish military base in Azerbaijan within the framework of these agreements or on the basis of some new agreements? Do you have such thoughts?

- Until now, there have been no discussions about this within the framework of bilateral relations. We have a very extensive framework of legal documents with Turkey. In other words, the agreements we have signed in many areas remain in force, these agreements also contain clauses on cooperation and mutual assistance in the military sphere. This is our right. If such a situation arises, if there is a very serious threat to Azerbaijan, then, of course, Turkey is our ally and we can take advantage of these opportunities. But there were no discussions on the stationing of a Turkish military base in Azerbaijan. Our cooperation in the military sphere is strengthening every year. Last year alone, 10 joint exercises were held. This year, due to the coronavirus, we had to take a short break. The exercises were conducted only twice this year. But these exercises also caused a great deal of anxiety in our region. I believe that there are no reasons or grounds for concern because these exercises are not aimed at any country. These exercises are aimed at strengthening our cooperation in the military sphere, improving the Azerbaijani army, bringing it closer to the standards of the Turkish army and studying the positive experience of Turkey in the field of army building. Since late September, a lot of information has been published in international media about a Turkish military base. There is no reason for this. Cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan is so strong and diverse that we are next to each other anyway. Whether there is a base here or not, we rely on Turkey and Turkey relies on us.

- You either advocate a negotiated settlement of the problem or say that you will solve it by military means. Moscow, in turn, announced yesterday that it does not accept a military solution. How do you assess this, i.e. if you are told to stop the operation, will you stop it?

- You know, we have already expressed our position on this issue several times. I have spoken about this and stick to my opinion. All the messages we were receiving from everywhere, in fact, not only during this period but also earlier, were that this issue has no military solution. We, in turn, did not react ahead of time, so to speak. If they say so, well, let them say so, this is their opinion. Our opinion is also that this should be resolved peacefully, but this should be resolved. However, what did we see? No result has been achieved over these 30 years. For 30 years, using this ceasefire regime, Armenia has built powerful engineering and fortification structures on the occupied lands. Today, thanks to the professionalism and courage of the Azerbaijani army, we are breaking through these fortifications. For 30 years, Armenia has strived not for peace but for keeping these lands under occupation forever. Because if you strive for peace, then why are you building these fortifications in Fuzuli, in Jabrayil or in the Aghdam direction? You build structures to keep these lands under control forever. So the ceasefire brought the process to this situation. Then the leadership of Armenia became completely impudent. Notice what Pashinyan and his defense minister said. The minister of defense said that they would start a new war with Azerbaijan, a new war for new lands. This was an open threat to us. Pashinyan said, "Karabakh is Armenia, full stop". That is, not a centimeter of land will be returned to us. How can this conflict be resolved peacefully in this case? I said that we are now in the process of resolving this issue by military means. We want this process to end as soon as possible and then the diplomatic process will begin. So our approach is to resolve this issue by military-political means. It is impossible to resolve it only by military means. I accept that because after the phase of active clashes, the parties should think about a peace treaty and do this. So there will be political avenues. Therefore, the military-political path is the most acceptable. We want to stop the military path but Armenia still thinks that it can return the lost lands, the lands we have liberated. Therefore, it regularly attacks us on the battlefield.

- Mr. President, am I right in understanding that you will advance at the front until the opposite side sits down at the negotiating table?

- We will move forward. In addition, they must comply with the ceasefire. Because it was them who broke it. A ceasefire was announced at noon. We gave a strict order to all our military units to comply with the ceasefire and stop firing. It was not easy though. We stopped at 12 o'clock but they did not. Then, within an hour or so, we resumed actions in self-defense and liberated several more villages. Therefore, Armenia must finally understand that it will not achieve anything this way. They must abide by the ceasefire. I believe that the leadership of Armenia should make a new statement in this regard that they are committed to the ceasefire and are complying with it. Then we will stop too. But, of course, the process can no longer last for years. After that, we should be provided with a timetable. During our Moscow meetings, we did not particularly insist on this because it is very difficult to agree on this within one day. We understand this. But once the peace process begins, the first issue on the agenda will be the timetable for the withdrawal of troops. Specific dates must be provided. On what days the Armenian armed forces will leave the rest of the lands to which we will be returning. Otherwise, we will go, as I said, to the end.

- In other words, it can be understood from this that if Armenia stops attacks and observes the ceasefire, then the process of new discussions will begin and the basis will be formed. As far as we understand, the Madrid principles which were discussed within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group in 2007, 2009 and 2012 were not mentioned during the talks in Moscow. But if I am not mistaken, the first clause of these principles envisages the withdrawal of troops from seven districts.

- Yes, right.

- Are these principles still on the agenda or do they need to be updated?

- No, we keep them on the agenda. I have already stated this. We are committed to the fundamental principles, called the Madrid principles because they are in our interests. Armenia has already stated that it does not accept these principles. According to the information provided to me, the prime minister of Armenia made a statement yesterday or the day before that they were unacceptable for them. So who is disrupting the process of negotiations? Armenia! Now we are liberating our lands. We are already hoisting our flag on the mountains that surround our cities, we are hoisting them on buildings located in our cities, we are on the victory march. Demonstrating adherence to fundamental principles under these circumstances requires a lot of political will and responsibility. As you have already noted, it is indicated there that five districts are to be returned at the first stage, two more districts at the second and then the future of Nagorno-Karabakh will be discussed. Azerbaijani IDPs should return to Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha, because Azerbaijanis accounted for 98 percent of the population of Shusha. They should return to Khankandi, and after that the Azerbaijani and Armenian population should live there together, just like in other parts of Azerbaijan, in Baku and other cities. Our position is this. The position of Armenia is to drive the Azerbaijanis out of there, as they have already done, then not to allow the Azerbaijanis to return, to consolidate the results of the policy of ethnic cleansing there, to raze our historical, religious and cultural monuments to the ground, to erase the cultural heritage of Azerbaijanis, and then to Armenianize these lands. This is their approach and this is ours.

- I want to ask you another question. Pashinyan made a statement yesterday that the Azerbaijani army is advancing from the north and south, as you said. He said that they had actually retreated for tactical reasons. What can you say about this?

- This is another lie of Pashinyan's. You know, a responsible person shouldn't lie. No-one, especially a politician, especially the head of the country. It doesn't befit anyone. All his actions, all his words are a lie – about history, about this conflict or about the events taking place today. If he does not know this, then what kind of a commander-in-chief is he? If the real situation is not reported to him, then he should make a remark to his military commanders. If he knows everything and lies – and I believe in this version more – then this is a great shame.

Today, the Azerbaijani army is inflicting crushing blows on the Armenian army in all directions. I have cited some figures, but they change on a daily basis. According to the exact data as of yesterday, we have destroyed 200 Armenian tanks and taken 33 tanks as trophies – not a single unit of Azerbaijani military equipment is in the hands of Armenia. A total of 33 tanks in operable condition are now in the hands of our army. In addition, two S-300 air defense systems have been destroyed, 35 "OSA", "KRUG", "KUB" and other equipment has been destroyed. Thus, the technical capabilities of the Armenian army have suffered a lot, i.e. they are coming to naught. We are advancing and liberating new and new lands every time, and this

is a reality. There will be new statements in the near future. This will weaken them even more. The Armenian people should also know the truth. We provide the most accurate information. Therefore, if the Armenian people want to know the real situation, they should listen to us.

- Mr. President, will the 30-year-old problem be resolved? I think it will be but I want to ask you. Will this problem of the occupation, which has been going on since the 1990s, be resolved this time or will everyone stop at a certain point? Will a new status quo be established? Will there be a final settlement? This may be a premature question but what would you say?

- In my opinion, it is already being resolved. I believe that international organizations and countries directly involved in this issue are seeing this, and this is a new reality. We have created this reality, and this issue is being resolved because the fundamental principles indicate that five districts are to be returned to us at the first stage. Of these, most of two districts, not completely yet but most of them, are already with us. If Armenia behaves badly again, then I hope that we will have other districts as well in the near future. Isn't this a solution to the problem? So we are essentially implementing the fundamental principles on the battlefield. Was the Minsk Group capable of achieving this? No, I wasn't! Therefore, I want to say once again that the solution to this issue is possible by military-political means. It is currently being done by military means. We want this period to end as soon as possible, so that a political process begins on the basis of fundamental principles after that.

The reason for the unresolved status of the issue is primarily the disrespectful attitude of international organizations for their own decisions because, as you know, the United Nations Security Council adopted four resolutions in 1993 requiring an unconditional and complete withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from our lands, i.e. without putting forward any conditions. But have they been fulfilled? They have not! The Minsk Group was established a year before that, 28 years have passed, has anything happened? No! So it seemed to us that international organizations are in favor of preserving the conflict in the state it is in. Let the Azerbaijani IDPs remain in this status forever. Let Armenia gain a foothold in the occupied lands. You know, there was an illegal settlement there. Illegal! This is a war crime. This is contrary to the Geneva Convention. They resettle Armenians from Syria to Nagorno-Karabakh, to Shusha, create opportunities for them, give money and already openly demonstrate this on television. In the international arena this is recognized as a crime. They want time to pass and the Azerbaijani people to come to terms with the loss of these lands. A new generation will grow up that has not seen these lands and will not want to return there. Azerbaijan will come to terms with this situation, in parallel there will be resettlement of Armenians from other countries, the Armenian population there will increase, and then they will say: "you know, this is already a reality, so just accept it". That was their purpose and, unfortunately, their patrons helped them with this. We have ruined these treacherous and mean plans. We have created a new reality. Today, everyone must agree and come to terms with this reality.

- I want to share one message with you. During the bombing in Tartar, we entered a shelter. There was a person, an IDP there. When we were preparing the report, he said that he was no longer an IDP. He said, I am a free citizen now. He is from Sugovushan and asked me to convey to you, in case of our meeting, his respect, love and greetings. As far as we understand, the balance of power in the region has changed. So there is no status quo any longer. The balance of power will change even more. What message would you like to address to the world, to Turkey?

- First of all, I want to convey my words to this citizen through your TV. I am glad there are thousands of people who, like him, speak these words today. They cry with joy, they say that they are no longer IDPs, that they have finally got rid of this situation. You know, I get thousands of letters. Reading them, to be honest, sometimes I can't hold back tears of joy either. There are so many sincere, warm and proud words in these letters, messages. Reading these letters, I become even more convinced how great the Azerbaijani people are. To live for many years in such a position, to live with hope, the hope that the day will come and they will return to their homes – this is really a great dedication. I am very happy that we are all giving this joy of victory to our people.

I want to say this again. I have already noted that everything there is destroyed. Inshallah, after the end of this military clashes, you and all of us – all people will go and see what atrocities the Armenians have committed there. All cities are destroyed, the picture is worse than Stalingrad. Houses have been destroyed, all our property has been plundered, window frames and doors have been removed. In a word, this is robbery. There is nothing left. Our soldiers report from Fuzuli villages, send in material. Fuzuli city is also before our eyes. It is impossible to find even one building there in good condition. In other words,

they have committed this atrocity. But our IDPs know that we will restore these cities and villages. We will build houses. They will return there, to the lands of their ancestors, and will live in peace and prosperity.

As for the situation in the region, it is changing, of course. If we look more broadly at the picture of our region changing in recent years, we will see that there are many innovations. Previously, there seemed to be some dogmas – these countries are allies, these are not allies or they are opposed to each other. Everything has changed now. For example, NATO member Turkey is currently very fruitfully cooperating with Russia – in Syria, in Libya, in other places, and, as we have already said, in our region. This is an innovation. If someone had said this 10 years ago, perhaps they would not have believed him. At the same time, the relations between some countries within NATO are not very sincere. And this is also an innovation. One gets the impression that there is no agreement. Look at the events related to the European Union. Who would have thought that Great Britain would leave the European Union and then a crisis would begin. No-one would have predicted. So there are no traditional hypotheses any more. Whatever country adapts to this the fastest will get ahead of the others.

Our policy has always been pragmatic – to analyze the real state of affairs correctly and consolidate our interests correctly. To think about how we can secure our interests, create tactics, make changes to tactical moves within the framework of a strategic vision. But along with this, we can't deviate from our principled position. This policy is bringing us success today. I believe that Turkey and Azerbaijan are among countries that prepared for the new world order faster. At the same time, Turkey as a great power on a global scale plays a very active role in the formation of a new world order – not only in our region but also in the world.

As for our region, Turkish-Azerbaijani unity is already a reality and everyone must come to terms with it. Our unity will grow stronger over the years because the potential of Turkey, the natural resources of Azerbaijan, transport projects between our countries, the provision of energy security of Europe through Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as the implementation of new transport projects from Central Asia, Afghanistan through the territory of Azerbaijan and Turkey, are all innovations. There is a new transport map. There is a new energy map. I am optimistic about the future. I am sure that we will achieve our goals. We are very glad that we have such a fraternal country, a strong state like Turkey which defends its position, defends its interests, is not afraid of anyone and moves forward. This increases our strength. Azerbaijan is Turkey's number one ally and Turkey is Azerbaijan's number one ally. This is a great asset. These events have further strengthened our ties.

- Mr. President, my last question is very short. You are saying that this time you will not stop until the occupied lands are liberated. Do I understand you correctly?

- Yes, you understand everything correctly. In the sense that our ultimate goal remains unchanged. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan recognized by international organizations and the world community must be ensured. We are ready to stop on the battlefield. If Armenia is ready for this and a timetable is presented to us, then we are ready to stop even tomorrow. But in terms of the process, we will not stop. We want the military process to already turn into a political one. If Armenia is ready for this and international organizations and large countries can convince it of this, then this will happen even earlier. If not, the Azerbaijani army will continue its victorious march.

- Mr. President, in the first months of 1993, I was here on the frontline. In 1994, I met with the late head of state, Mr. Heydar Aliyev. It seems that this place did not exist in Baku then.

- Really? You met? Yes, this place was built later.

- And today I am meeting with you. So I have had meetings with two heads of state. The current situation at the frontline is completely different from what it was in 1993. On behalf of NTV and on my own behalf, I express my deep gratitude to you for receiving us and for answering our questions.

- Thank you. Many thanks to you too. Please pass on my greetings to the NTV team. In Azerbaijan, Turkish channels were popular even before, but in the current period their audience has become even wider. When I turn on the TV in the morning, I also watch Turkish channels, including NTV. The support and solidarity with us in the media and in Turkish society these days is a manifestation of true brotherhood. We saw again that the famous expression of my father "One nation, two states" is not just an expression, but a reality. We have created this reality.

You know, there are many countries in the world whose peoples are close to each other – from the point of view of ethnicity, religion, culture. But this does not mean at all that there is close cooperation between these countries, that there are fraternal relations between them. There are many such examples,

and you know this very well. Our advantage is that the presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan, i.e. my dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan and myself, have erected such a solid building on the basis of a common history, ethnic roots and language, and this will last forever. If future generations also contribute to this, then this building will be magnificent – the building of Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood. On behalf of the Azerbaijani people, I express my deep gratitude to all our brothers, all people living in Turkey. We saw that we are not alone. As my brother Tayyip Bey has already said, “Azerbaijan should always know and knows that Turkey is next to him”, and this gives us strength.

At the same time, I want to reiterate that the main reason that other countries do not interfere in these matters today are the statements the distinguished President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made from the very first hours that Azerbaijan is not alone, that Turkey is next to Azerbaijan and will be next to us until the end.

Thank you again, and I wish all our brothers in Turkey happiness and prosperity.

- **Thank you very much, Mr. President!**

- Thank you!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Turkish A Haber TV channel

16.10.2020 [12:00]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by Turkish A Haber TV channel.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

- Greetings to all from A Haber. The eyes of the whole world are focused on the Karabakh region these days. Karabakh, which has been under Armenian occupation for 30 years, is experiencing a great tragedy, because despite the humanitarian ceasefire, Armenians continue to fire at civilians and the Azerbaijani army. Naturally, the Azerbaijani army does not leave these attacks unanswered and dealing heavy blows to the Armenian army.

What is the latest situation in the region and what can be expected? We will learn the opinion of the President of Azerbaijan, Commander-in-Chief Mr. Ilham Aliyev.

Mr. President, we express our deep gratitude to you, in particular, on behalf of A Haber. Thank you very much for receiving us.

- Thank you.

- Mr. President, of course, we will start our conversation with the situation in the region. Yesterday Armenia fired on civilians yet again. In Tartar, a cemetery was fired on and three of our Azerbaijani brothers became martyrs. What is your assessment of this attack?

- This is yet another manifestation of Armenian fascism. Usually, whenever they are defeated on the battlefield, they fire on civilians. We saw this during the first Karabakh war. It was our loathsome neighbors who committed the Khojaly genocide.

This time, seeing their helplessness in front of the Azerbaijani army on the battlefield and their inability to resist us in the occupied lands, they started targeting civilians again. Our citizens died as a result of this dastardly attack, both in Ganja and at the cemetery in Tartar yesterday... This is a place where people go for funerals, it is considered sacred to any person. But apparently there is nothing "sacred" for our loathsome neighbors. This is a crime against humanity, which once again demonstrates the predatory nature of Armenia. It also shows that such dastardly attacks cannot force us to deviate from our path, they cannot break the will of the Azerbaijani people. We will continue to restore our territorial integrity.

- Of course, Azerbaijan acts very carefully and accurately in the issue of civilians. Until today, not a single civilian has been hurt among the Armenians. However, up to now 46 of our Azerbaijani brothers have become martyrs. Why does the West remain tight-lipped over these massacres?

- Unfortunately, civilian casualties are continuing, there are already 47. A total of 222 civilians have been injured, about 2,000 houses have been either completely destroyed or seriously damaged. I have already said that we will avenge these people on the battlefield. We have never opened and are still not opening fire on civilians despite the fact that there have been attacks on Ganja and Tartar. Today, from 6 to 8 am – it is 9:10 now – more than 220 shells fell on Tartar, Aghdam, Goranboy and other districts. So these heinous attacks continue. Their main goal is to kill civilians, sow panic and fear among the population of Azerbaijan, stop us and achieve their dirty intentions. But they are seeing that this does not work out, and no matter how many shells fall, the citizens of Azerbaijan proudly live on their land and endure all these difficulties. They are united around one goal – to return Karabakh, to raise the flag of Azerbaijan in all the occupied lands and to restore our territorial integrity.

As for your second question why the West is silent, we saw this during the first Karabakh war too. Armenia unleashed aggression against us, occupied our lands, committed genocide against our people, but sanctions were applied against Azerbaijan. At that time, in 1992 and 1993, the Western media formed such a perception that Azerbaijan was an occupier and aggressor, while Armenia was a victim of aggression. We are seeing this even today on a smaller scale, because it is no longer possible to deny and hide the truth.

- Mr. President, at that time, in 1993, in particular, in November, a ceasefire was also announced. And it was also violated by Armenia, which massacred people. Today Armenia wants a ceasefire again. What is the purpose of the ceasefire – to stop the advance of the Azerbaijani army?

- You know, this is their tactic. Armenia requested a ceasefire. Convinced that they could no longer defend the occupied lands on the battlefield, to hold on to them, they requested a ceasefire. We also received such an appeal – you know that Russia has undertaken this mission – and said that a ceasefire could be

declared for humanitarian purposes, for the exchange of bodies and prisoners. However, at the same time, the Moscow statement indicated that it was necessary to resume negotiations on the substance of the issue. In addition, the format of the negotiations should remain unchanged. But apparently they wanted to take advantage of the ceasefire. Less than a day later this dastardly attack on Ganja was carried out. After that, they began to strike at our other cities and, in fact, grossly violated the ceasefire. So this is their tactic. Obviously, they needed a ceasefire in order to gather strength, take mobilization measures and launch new attacks on us, because after this ceasefire, they tried to occupy the settlement of Hadrut again and attacked it three times. And they were defeated all three times. Their intention is to return the lands they lost that do not belong to them and to continue their aggressive policy.

- By the way, false propaganda is currently being conducted. They claim that Hadrut is still with them, they cannot accept it.

- Yes, they are still engaged in this false propaganda. The Azerbaijani flag has been flying in Hadrut for several days now. The vast majority of the hills adjacent to Hadrut are under our control. If Hadrut had not been taken, it would have been impossible to take the villages of Khojavand district. We moved there only from the Hadrut direction.

- Mr. President, since the announcement of the humanitarian ceasefire, transport planes have been constantly delivering missiles from Russia, in particular, to the Yerevan airport. This, in essence, is a crime. In particular, you talked about the closure of borders with Iranian President Rouhani and about the delivery of missiles with Russia. These weapons are provided free of charge. What would you like to say to Iran and Russia in this regard?

- We do not have any information about the shipment of weapons from Iran to Armenia. On the contrary, I can say that Iran and Georgia have closed their airspace and land roads for the transportation of weapons to Armenia. In this regard, we would like to reiterate our gratitude to the Governments of Iran and Georgia. According to our information, weapons are being smuggled across Georgian territory by commercial and cargo planes.

Armenia has recently purchased one plane. According to our information, it bought it for \$30-40 million. It was purchased by wealthy Armenian businessmen living in Russia – Karapetyan, Abrahanyan and others. They are sending Armenians living in Russia to fight against us as mercenaries. At the same time, the purchase of this aircraft, Il-76, allowed Armenia the opportunity to smuggle weapons into its country. Every time you send military products, you need to declare them. Their statements indicate that this is a civilian cargo but the plane transported anti-tank weapons “Kornet” and “Konkurs”, air defense systems “Igla”. At the same time, according to the information we have, they are smuggling the missiles purchased in Russia. Therefore, we addressed the International Civil Aviation Organization and asked it to investigate this issue and stop it. This is considered an international crime. Smuggling weapons to Armenia is unacceptable.

Russian authorities have also told us that Russia does not send weapons to Armenia. Therefore, we think that Armenian businessmen living in Russia, wealthy people illegally acquire these weapons at some military factories and send them to Armenia. The investigation in this direction is ongoing.

- And now, Mr. President, let's “go” to the frontline. Of course, the peoples of Azerbaijan and Turkey look forward to good news from the frontline. I want to show this on the map. Here we are talking about an area of 18,000 square kilometers. This territory has been under occupation for 30 years. How many thousand square kilometers of this territory have been liberated so far? At present, the Azerbaijani Army is advancing and delivering crushing blows. We are saying that the Armenian army has lost half of its strength to date. How much in terms of figures did the Armenian army lose? Can you provide any figures in this connection, Mr. President?

- It is not so difficult to calculate the area of the liberated lands even though the figure changes every day. I informed the Azerbaijani people about the liberation of six new villages yesterday. More villages were freed on the previous day. This process continues. We can say that we liberate new territories and new strategic heights every day. Therefore, these numbers are changing. But the information provided to date gives grounds to say which districts have been liberated.

This map, for example, doesn't specify Hadrut. Hadrut is already with us. The vast majority of villages around Fuzuli are with us. Now we see Fuzuli in front of us. In addition, we have moved forward in the southern direction. In the north, we also have positions on Murovdag. We have Sugovushan. So we have made great strides in all areas, and this process continues. I believe and am sure that the Azerbaijani

people are closely following this, especially the residents of the villages we are liberating from occupation. For them, these are historic days, of course.

- So how much in square kilometers on average?

- I would not want to say that because this is a figure that changes daily. Our goal is to fully restore our territorial integrity and hoist the Azerbaijani flag in all occupied lands.

- Can you name the losses of the Armenian side in figures?

- These numbers are also changing on a daily basis. More than 200 tanks have been destroyed and 33 tanks have been taken as booty. They are in good condition and they are with us. Thirty-five units of “OSA” air defense systems have been destroyed. In addition, two very modern “S-300” systems have been destroyed.

- They are very expensive.

- Yes, they are very expensive. Another very expensive air defense system, “TOR”, has also been destroyed. Approximately 170 trucks have been disabled or are in our possession. Also, 16 command centers have been destroyed. According to our calculations, during these days the Armenian army suffered damage worth almost \$2 billion, and it keeps on growing. I appealed to the leadership of Armenia: observe the ceasefire, provide us with a timetable and leave our territories so that this war stops and you can keep the remaining weapons. Otherwise, if it goes on like this, we will destroy all their weapons.

- How many human losses does Armenia have, Mr. President?

- Their human losses – I mean the data published in the press – are over 600 people. But according to our data, their losses are several times greater.

- So Armenia is hiding its losses.

- Of course.

- But the situation at the front is different.

- If 200 tanks have been destroyed to date, then you can see what figure it comes to by counting their crew. In addition, count the losses on the battlefield, the personnel of the command centers and the crews of other installations. There is footage of the destruction of their equipment, so I would not like to give any specific figures. I am always in favor of providing exact figures, not unverified data. But their losses are surely above 600.

- Mr. President, can we talk about the destruction of about half of their weapons?

- We don't know how many weapons they have. But the question arises as to where they get the money for the weapons. Everyone knows the budget and foreign exchange reserves of Armenia. In just 17-18 days, their weapons worth \$2 billion have been destroyed, and they have more. This is the statistics of weapons destroyed in the occupied territories alone. How many more weapons are there in Armenia? Notice how many weapons they have. Where did they buy it? Where did they get the money? Of course, they don't have so much money. So they were given it for free.

- Mr. President, 18 October is an important day – Independence Day of Azerbaijan. The people of Azerbaijan expect good news from you on this day, Inshallah. Will you announce any good news about Karabakh? Would you like to share it with our Turkish and Azerbaijani brothers on A Haber?

- You know, this is a truly historic day because Azerbaijan gained independence for the second time in the 20th century. The first years of independence were very difficult and tragic for us. We could have lost our independence – as we did in 1920 when independence lasted only two years and the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic fell. This time, Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan and, at the same time, civil strife within the country led to a major crisis. Only after national leader Heydar Aliyev came to power in 1993 did the situation stabilize and Azerbaijan confidently embarked on the path of development.

Therefore, 18 October is a very significant date for us. But during this period, during these 17-18 days, I have never set the task for the army to take this location on this or that date. Because war has its own rules, its own laws. The key thing for us is to restore our territorial integrity. It doesn't really matter when we share the good news – on the 17th, 18th or 19th. It is important that we do this, that we achieve this. At the same time, we can and we probably will provide information about the liberated villages today, but the most important thing is to occupy strategic heights. Because by taking these heights, we gain control over a wider territory, which creates conditions for a more successful counter-offensive operation by the Azerbaijani army in the future.

- The heart of Karabakh, the apple of its eye is Shusha. The Azerbaijani people are waiting for news about Shusha. Inshallah, are you heading for Shusha?

- We are headed for all the territories. Every inch of the occupied lands, every city is dear to us, it is native for us. For me, all villages and cities are equally valuable. But you know very well that Shusha occupies a special place in the hearts of the Azerbaijani people. This is our historic city, a hotbed of ancient culture. Shusha gave the Azerbaijani people many very talented and outstanding personalities. Of course, without Shusha our mission will be half done. Naturally, this issue has always been on the agenda in the course of discussions.

You know, there were many questions at the negotiating table in the previous period. Some suggestions were that Azerbaijan should get back five districts and be content with that, while the rest should stay with the Armenians. In other words, we were told that we want everything at once, but this can't happen and that there must be a compromise and so on. But I never agreed to that. It would be completely wrong to get five districts and leave the rest for later, indefinitely. Therefore, at different stages, mediators and some international organizations wondered why Ilham Aliyev did not agree to this. We are telling him that five districts are being returned now, although Armenia, as it turns out now, did not want to return these five districts either. But there have been such proposals. However, my position has always been that without Shusha our mission would be half done. Therefore, of course, the liberation of Shusha occupies a special place among our goals. We must aspire to this. We must achieve this. When will that happen?

- Soon, Mr. President?

- The near future will show.

- Inshallah. Your late father probably bequeathed to you to liberate Karabakh. By the way, I would like to learn about his will. You are actually fulfilling it now. On behalf of the Turkish people, we congratulate you and the Azerbaijani people. What do you want to say about your father's will?

- You know, I have always tried to be true to my father's path. In 2003, when the Azerbaijani people trusted me for the first time, I said before the election that if you trusted me, I would remain committed to the political course of Heydar Aliyev and would follow his path in all spheres. I am glad to have kept my word. Today, the rapid and successful development of Azerbaijan, the great respect we enjoy in the international arena, the solution of social, economic and other problems within the country, the implementation of large projects are, of course, a continuation of Heydar Aliyev's path.

The world is changing, of course. The balance of power in the world is changing. Today's world cannot be compared to what it was in 2003 but our strategic goals remain unchanged: to strengthen the independence, to remain committed to an independent policy, never to depend on anyone, not to bow our heads to anyone, to preserve and protect our dignity, and to restore our territorial integrity. This was my father's will in a nutshell.

Of course, the restoration of territorial integrity is our number one goal. In order to achieve this, we have made great effort – political, economic, diplomatic and military. Our army has actually been formed anew. The whole world can see the potential of our army today. According to the information provided to me, military specialists from some developed countries are already studying our experience. I am sure this experience will be reflected both in books and in research papers. Therefore, remaining committed to my father's path, we are fulfilling this honorable mission. Inshallah, we will complete it to the end.

- Azerbaijan has created a very strong army. There was not even an Air Force in the first Karabakh war but now there is a powerful air force, a strong army. Of course, TB2 strike drones have become a major force in the region. You purchased them from Turkey and are currently using them. How did the attack drones change the course of the war?

- They changed it a lot. You know, in 30 years Armenia built very powerful engineering fortifications along the entire contact line in the occupied territories, carried out major engineering and strengthening work. In some places, they have four lines of defense. Large trenches were dug and other engineering work was carried out. There are large concrete slabs, shelters and bunkers there. The terrain of the region is such that it a natural fortification is itself because this is a mountainous area, we are going from the bottom up. It is very difficult for any army. It is a very difficult and risky task. Therefore, the work we have carried out in this direction required great heroism, of course. Precise destruction of enemy equipment required unmanned aerial vehicles. We are very glad that the developed military-industrial complex of fraternal Turkey has begun the production of these excellent attack and conventional UAVs. Azerbaijan is the first foreign state to have acquired them from Turkey. As I have already said, Armenian military equipment worth \$1 billion has been destroyed with the help of Turkish drones alone. Another billion worth of

equipment has been destroyed by our other military facilities. So this has greatly changed the course of the war.

- You have also talked about tunnels in the region, about echeloned defense. In fact, we saw this during the operations in Syria. These are the methods used by PKK and PYD. The same methods have been used in this region for 30 years. From this point of view, does the opposing side receive any support from PKK and PYD?

- Maybe. Even before these clashes, we had information that PKK had set up a camp there because, as you know, Nagorno-Karabakh was an uncontrolled territory. There was no international control mechanism there. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan are members of many international organizations. There is a control mechanism and monitoring, but this is a gray area, i.e. an uncontrolled territory. Therefore, smuggling and drug trafficking thrived there, exercises of illegal armed groups were held, and there were PKK camps. It is not ruled out that they have also played a role in the construction of these fortifications.

- How many RKK camps are there in the region?

- We cannot say this because they do not stand in one place, they are always on the move. But there were quite a few of them. In any case, we had this information even before the latest clashes. Today, there are suspicious persons among those who were killed on the Armenian side. There are people with Canadian and Lebanese passports. There are people who cannot be identified. But it is certain that they are not Armenian soldiers. In other words, they are mercenaries.

- Armenia is carrying out missile attacks from its territory. If it continues to attack from its territory, do you have the right to conduct operations on the territory of Armenia?

- No, we are not thinking about that. I have repeatedly said that we have no military targets on the territory of Armenia. We have no intentions of moving the military operation to the territory of Armenia. We do not set our sights on the lands of other countries. We simply carry out these operations within the borders of the country, within the framework of Azerbaijani lands recognized as such by international organizations and the world community. So far we have not crossed into the territory of Armenia.

I must also say that an attack was launched on us on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in July. The armed forces of Armenia managed to penetrate into Tovuz district and some of its territories. We threw them out of there and were able to defend our lands. We threw them back. After that, we could have crossed the border. In other words, there were no serious obstacles in front of us. These battles already show that if we have managed to break through from here, it would have been much easier to do it there because there are no such fortifications there. But we didn't do it because we thought it would be wrong. We defend ourselves on our lands and must expel the occupiers from our lands. But if they continue to use such dangerous weapons as "Tochka-U", "Iskander", "Scud" and others from the territory of Armenia, just as they struck at Ganja from the Vardenis region of Armenia, then this will become a legitimate military target for us. Everyone should know this.

- You are receiving messages of support from Turkey and Pakistan. In particular, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said, "We are ready to provide any support." In this context, will you ask Turkey and Pakistan for military support?

- No. We have no such thoughts. Turkey and Pakistan are the first countries to support us. After them, the number of such countries began to grow. Following this, Afghanistan expressed its open support. Support was also voiced by Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries. Fraternal Turkey provided the biggest support. From the very first hours, my brother, dear President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated very clearly and decisively that Azerbaijan is not alone and Turkey is next to us. This encouraged us even more. But there can be no question of military support. It is not necessary. The false information invented by the prime minister of Armenia is intended to mislead the international community, of course. For example, he said in an interview with Russian television yesterday that Turkey, Pakistan, soldiers from Syria and Lebanon were fighting on the side of Azerbaijan. All this is a lie. It is not too difficult to expose it.

On the first day of the clashes, they claimed that a Turkish F-16 plane had shot down an Armenian Su-25. We said – provide evidence. They could not. Then everyone was convinced that it was a lie. They are not talk about it any longer. Now they have invented a new lie that Pakistani and Turkish soldiers are fighting for us. Let them produce evidence. There is none. The Armenian side is primarily trying to diminish the strength of the Azerbaijani army, to suggest that Azerbaijan could not have done it alone. Secondly, another of his lies is that these clashes allegedly have already gone beyond the region and turned into a

more global confrontation. This is also a lie. We receive only moral and political support from Turkey, Pakistan and other fraternal countries.

- Mr. President, who is worried about the friendship and close ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan?

- Those who don't like us, those who are not interested in the power of Turkey growing.

- Who?

- This is well known. There are such circles in many countries. These are Islamophobic circles. Unfortunately, Islamophobia is growing in Europe today. The attitude towards refugees from poor countries is also obvious. Therefore, Islamophobic parties are now receiving parliamentary seats in several European states. Radical fascist parties are getting more votes. This is a very dangerous trend, first of all for Europe, because this is a tendency that paves the way for racism, discrimination, xenophobia and Islamophobia. At the same time, along with Islamophobic forces, there are circles concerned about Turkey's strength. Erdogan's Turkey is not the Turkey of 20 years ago. We and our brothers living in Turkey know this. Turkey enjoys great authority in the world today. No-one can dictate anything to Turkey or force it to do anything. Turkey defends its interests in the world, the interests of its allies, builds its security the way it wants and enjoys authority in the international arena. Not a single issue in the region can be resolved without the participation and consent of Turkey. Syria, Libya and the Mediterranean have demonstrated this. So these are the forces that are not interested in the power of Turkey growing and are worried about it. This is natural.

- Mr. President, you said that unity gives brings about strength. Why is it important for Turkey to be strong?

- It is important for the Turkic world because it is a great power that makes us stronger too. I have spoken about this many times – both in Turkey and in Azerbaijan. When my dear brother President was here, I said that the Turkish-Azerbaijani unity brings stability to the region. If these exact messages had not come from Turkey in the first hours of the clashes, then perhaps others would have intervened in these matters. Turkey's messages stopped everyone: Azerbaijan is not alone. Turkey will be next to Azerbaijan until the end. Of course, the Azerbaijani-Turkish unity has already turned into a very serious geopolitical factor, and this is a positive factor. Our unity is not aimed at the interests of any country. We simply defend our interests and going our own way. Let no-one interfere in our affairs and don't poke their nose into our internal issues. This is what we want. Where did Turkey interfere before? Nowhere! Whose affairs did Azerbaijan interfere? No-one's! We are simply saying: don't touch us, step aside. We will be friends and partners, we will cooperate, but let everyone go their own way. We want this and we have the right to do so.

- Is it possible to find a way out in the settlement of the Karabakh problem at the negotiating table without Turkey's participation?

- Turkey is already de facto at the negotiating table. I have already said that. This is a reality. Turkey is discussing this issue with countries located in another region today. You also know that a telephone conversation took place between the presidents of Russia and Turkey. There were negotiations between the ministers of foreign affairs and defense. At the same time, high-ranking officials of Turkey have been in contact with their colleagues from Iran and other countries. Therefore, Turkey is de facto here. When the Minsk Group was established in 1992 – Turkey is already a member of it – it did not become a co-chair for reasons I don't know. In other words, we wanted Turkey to be a co-chair from the very beginning. But Turkey itself did not go for that at the time. If it had wanted to do that, I think it could have become a co-chair. This is why I am saying that there is a great difference between today's Turkey of Erdogan and the then Turkey. If it had been a co-chair, this issue would have been resolved long ago. Therefore, we are saying that this issue cannot be resolved without Turkey. I am not saying that the Minsk Group should be consigned to history. No, let them work too, even though they have not reached any result in 30 years. But to leave Turkey outside this process is both wrong and impossible.

- Mr. President, how would you assess the position of France, a co-chair of the Minsk Group?

- You know, I think the latest statements of France have been positive. At the same time, my last telephone conversation with the President of France was also very positive. Of course, France as a co-chair should be neutral. I have already said that. Any country can have special ties with another country. In other words, at the national level any country is free. No-one can object to that but co-chairmanship is a different mechanism. This imposes a great responsibility on co-chair countries. Therefore, within the framework of this mandate, they must be neutral. I think that the actions and approaches of France today are positive.

- Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov made a statement saying that they could send military observers to the Karabakh region. Would you agree to this?

- You know, at the same time the office of the President of Russia stated that this was possible with the consent of both sides – Azerbaijan and Armenia. In other words, this is something that speaks for itself. First, both parties must agree to this. Secondly, the fundamental principles – and I have already expressed my position on this matter – do provide for the dispatch of peacekeeping forces to the region but only at the last stage. The lands must be freed from occupation, five districts must be returned to us, then two more, and then the Azerbaijani population must return to Nagorno-Karabakh and Shusha. After all this peacekeeping forces may come. Therefore, it is too early to talk about it today. Third, what countries will be represented in this peacekeeping force? This must also be agreed by both parties. During the negotiations, there were no discussions on this issue. I believe that the statement of the office of the President of Russia is fully justifiable. Both parties must agree to this. You must agree to this and provide a timetable. Today, when there are active clashes, it is a little too early to talk about it.

- Sure. There are ample minerals in Armenian-occupied Karabakh. We know that there are gold deposits in Kalbajar. These gold deposits are actually the main concern for Armenia.

- True but the most important thing is their eternal hatred of us. Armenia is pursuing a policy of fascism. They instill hatred for Turkey and Azerbaijan, describe Turks as enemies to his children. They poison the brains of their people. So this is what lies at the heart of Armenia's occupation policy. This is the main issue. In other regions too, there are fertile and excellent lands for both crop and livestock production. They are exploiting them. There are gold deposits in Kalbajar. They are illegally exploiting them. We have sent letters to all the companies that help them in this matter and invest there.

In my statements before the start of these clashes, I said that we are warning all these foreign companies for the last time – either cease your activities or we will sue you where we will have the final say. Because their activities are illegal. Armenia sells the gold mined there abroad and makes money. They transport the natural resources extracted there, the products of our land to Armenia. Therefore, there are many objectives here. The main thing is to preserve these lands forever under the yoke of Armenia. But they could not achieve this either.

- Mr. President, you said that Soros is Pashinyan's father.

- Yes, this is true.

- It turns out that Azerbaijan is also fighting with Soros in the region.

- With Soros too. In fact, as I said earlier, when I talk about Soros, I mean not only George Soros. This is a concept. This movement is destructive and predatory. This is a colonial movement. Look at the photo of Pashinyan with Soros. What a disgusting photo. It is on the internet. They stand there, their bodies pressed against each other. A shameful photo. They both laugh, both have a smile on their faces. This photo actually shows who Pashinyan is. Because Soros groups played a big role in organizing the coup in Armenia and Pashinyan always took an anti-Russian position. The name of his party in Armenian is "Elk". When translated, it means "Exit". Exit from where? From the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) with Russia and from the Eurasian Union. When he was a deputy, he always spoke out against Russia, took an anti-Russian position. Therefore, I am surprised when some political circles in Russia still take his side. After all, he made a revolution against pro-Russian forces, imprisoned pro-Russian presidents, as well as the chairman of the main opposition pro-Russian party. He did everything against Russia, started criminal cases against Russian company "Gazprom" and the railway company of this country. He arrested the chairman of the CSTO, a NATO-like organization, who was of Armenian origin. So this is a person who is ruled by Soros. Also, look at his team – they are all representatives of the Soros Foundation, Open Society Institute, Amnesty International. So Soros came to power in Armenia, but he suffered a fiasco.

- Mr. President, did you ask Turkey to station a military base in the country? In this regard, you made a statement in which you said that a Turkish military base could be located on the territory of Azerbaijan. Have you had any negotiations on this matter?

- No, no negotiations on this issue have been held. This has never have been discussed and such a question does not arise today either. Our cooperation with Turkey in the military sphere is getting stronger every day. I have already spoken about this, and I want to say again that 10 military exercises were held last year. Exercises involving air defense forces, special purpose troops and others. Therefore, cooperation in this area is at the highest level, and the deployment of a base in Azerbaijan has never been a subject of discussion.

- Mr. President, you said that Azerbaijan had changed the status quo at the frontline. What was the status quo and what will the new status quo be like for Azerbaijan?

- The status quo is gone. I have already spoken about this, and this is a reality. What was the status quo? It meant the preservation of lands under occupation. And this was despite the fact that 10 years ago the Minsk Group co-chairs made a very positive statement on this matter. It said that the status quo was unacceptable. But no tangible steps were taken afterwards. We have been waiting for a change in the status quo for 30 years to achieve this through negotiations. But that did not happen. Therefore, we destroyed it on the battlefield. It is gone. The city of Jabrayil is with us, most of the villages of Jabrayil district are with us. The vast majority of villages in Fuzuli district are also with us. Now we already see the city of Fuzuli. Hadrut is with us, Sugovushan is with us.

- Can you see the center of Fuzuli now?

- We can see it, of course.

- So can we hear good news from there in the near future, Inshallah?

- Inshallah. So what kind of status quo can we talk about. There is no status quo or a line of contact. We broke through it as well. So over these days we did what we could not do within the framework of the negotiations.

- Mr. President, I want to ask you one more question. The war is still going on. I would like to ask you about the events that saddened and delighted you the most. By the way, the symbolic photo is of 4-year-old Bakhtiyar from Ganja who is smiling despite the injury. This photo has become a symbol for the whole world. We have interviewed him. And you know what he said, this four-year-old child? He said, "Karabakh is ours, Karabakh is Azerbaijan!"

- Yes.

- Mr. President, what impressed you the most, saddened and made you happy?

- Our losses sadden me most of all. Both civilians and soldiers. Our young soldiers, having demonstrated selflessness and valor, become martyrs in the name of their native lands. This is a great tragedy – for our people, for their relatives, a great tragedy for their parents. Therefore, the death of every Azerbaijani – whether civilian or soldier, it does not matter – is the greatest suffering for me. They are all our compatriots, our sons, brothers.

And what pleases me most of all is the unbreakable will of the Azerbaijani people because people living under fire do not move. Armenia wants to turn Tartar into Stalingrad, into the second Aghdam, Fuzuli. Why are you shelling this civilian city? Take that funeral ceremony. More than 200 shells were dropped this morning in the course of two hours. Why? What is there in Tartar? People live there. So this is Armenian fascism. They also want to intimidate us. In addition, they think that we are living in the 1990s when they attacked us, our army could not resist them and our citizens left those regions, became refugees and internally displaced persons. They have these ideas. But they should know that the present-day Azerbaijan is not what it was before. Today's Azerbaijan is a strong state capable of defending itself. Our citizens live under shelling but do not leave these places. Their houses are on fire, all property is lost, but they say "Long live the Motherland!" This makes me happy the most. And also to see our flag on the lands liberated from occupation. This is what makes me happy.

- Mr. President, 83 million people in Turkey pray for Azerbaijan every day. Do you feel these prayers? What would you like to say in connection with this to the Turkish people? What message do you have?

- Of course, I do. These prayers and the prayers of the Azerbaijani people, our friends and brothers living in other countries are saving us because our cause is a cause of justice. We are fighting for our lands. Armenia's war is a war of evil forces. We have always seen and felt Turkey's support. In recent years, the leaders of Turkey and Azerbaijan have tied our countries to each other with such strong ties that this unity and this brotherhood is unshakable. I receive many letters from Turkey these days. People write, "Mr. President, I am also ready to come, I am ready to help". This is very touching and makes us happy. Our unity manifests itself once again during this difficult time. Therefore, I express my deep gratitude to all our Turkish brothers. We feel and see their support, it gives us additional strength and reinforces our determination. My dear brother, dear President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, "Azerbaijan is not alone, Turkey is next to Azerbaijan". This, in fact, is the most beautiful expression, the best saying that reflects our unity.

- Mr. President, in conclusion I would like to ask how you would describe Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

- Recep Tayyip Erdogan is my brother. We have a very close relationship. Both as presidents and as two people. I have deep respect for him. He is a world leader. He has raised Turkey to high peaks. He has elevated Turkey. Thanks to him, the whole world knows Turkey as a worthy and proud state. Both some countries and, unfortunately, some political forces in Turkey itself are showing great injustice towards him. I cannot interfere in these matters, of course, but as a person, I cannot remain indifferent to this because he has done a lot for Turkey. There is no-one else in Turkey today who would love it so much, protect its interests, be ready to do anything for it. Everyone should know this. Everyone in Azerbaijan knows this. Many people in Turkey also know this but I want to tell those who don't. Political strife takes place everywhere but there is also a national question. There should be no political struggle in the national question. In the face of danger, we must unite. Turkey is being attacked from all sides today. To endure this, to withstand these attacks takes tremendous courage. It requires great professionalism, knowledge and determination. This is the kind of person my brother is. I can say this absolutely sincerely because I know him well. I would like to wish him continued success. His words, his actions, his life are very important for the entire Turkic world, and we will continue to make great effort to unite and deepen cooperation of the Turkic world.

- And last question, Mr. President. You said about the need to be together with Turkey. In this context, have you received messages of support from the Turkish opposition?

- Yes. Such messages have arrived. You know, I am the kind of person who says everything as it is. There is no need for diplomacy in this matter. The main thing for me in Turkey is the attitude towards my brother. Someone who treats him well has a place in my heart. Those who treat him unfairly, oppose him, there is no place for them in my heart. Of course, I express my gratitude to everyone who wants to provide support. However, I believe – and everyone should know this – that if Erdogan wasn't there today, Turkey could be faced with a big disaster. Let everyone know and understand this. I say this as an ordinary citizen of Azerbaijan. You can hear it today from 10 million citizens of Azerbaijan. The Turkish-Azerbaijani unity is strengthening. Therefore, people who ensure this unity should receive the necessary support everywhere, in national issues. As for questions between parties, this is a different matter. There is a national issue in which everyone should be a patriot.

- Mr. President, thank you very much for taking the time to answer our questions.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

17.10.2020 [13:29]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has addressed the nation.
AZERTAC presents the address.

Nationwide address of President Ilham Aliyev

- Dear fellow compatriots!

Today, the fascist leadership of Armenia committed yet another war crime. The cities of Ganja and Mingachevir came under rocket fire. As a result of this cowardly shelling, our compatriots have been killed and wounded. May Allah rest all our martyrs in peace and send healing to our wounded compatriots!

This once again shows the fascist nature of the Armenian leadership. This is not the first time our cities have come under fire. Armenia fires on Tartar, Aghdam, Goranboy, Aghjabadi and other cities practically every day. As a result of this fire, our citizens have been killed and wounded, more than 2,000 houses have been destroyed or seriously damaged. However, these cowardly actions cannot break the will of the Azerbaijani people.

Armenian leadership is committing a war crime. Shooting at civilians, including firing missiles, is a war crime, and they must and will bear responsibility for this crime. We are giving their answer on the battlefield. We are avenging and will continue to avenge the deaths of our martyrs, of innocent civilians on the battlefield. We have never fought or will ever wage a war against the civilian population. We are not Armenians. We have our own way, we have our own cause, and all the Azerbaijani people are united around this cause. All the Azerbaijani people are showing solidarity and patriotism.

The victorious Azerbaijani Army is driving and will continue to drive the enemies away from our lands in the ongoing battles. I said that if they do not leave our lands of their own free will, we will chase them away like dogs and we are doing that. Every day, the victorious Azerbaijani Army liberates new strategic locations, new heights and new settlements from the occupiers. Our revenge takes place on the battlefield.

These days, from 27 September to the present, a crushing blow has been dealt to Armenia's military potential. I just want to bring some figures to the attention of our citizens. I must say that the list I will provide is incomplete. An even larger amount of enemy equipment has been destroyed and, of course, it is impossible to calculate it accurately during the battle. However, the figures I will quote show explicitly that we have gained a complete advantage on the battlefield and have almost completely destroyed the military-technical potential of Armenia. The question is where do so many weapons and so much equipment come from to Armenia? Armenia's military budget is well known. Armenia's state budget is also well known. Armenia is a bankrupt country. The country's foreign debt accounts for 60-70 percent of the country's gross domestic product. The country's foreign exchange reserves are only \$1.5 billion, which are bank reserves. That is, it is not free funds. What money are they getting these weapons and equipment with? The equipment we have destroyed and taken as booty so far is worth at least \$2 billion. But there is still more in their hands – in the occupied territories and in the territory of Armenia. The question is who is arming them. In some cases, we are criticized that we are arming ourselves, we are buying weapons and this can allegedly aggravate the situation and turn it towards an unacceptable direction. The question is what about Armenia's armament. Where do so many weapons and hardware come from to this poor country? Today, they are smuggling weapons and equipment using some smuggling schemes. And they are very dangerous and very destructive weapons. Therefore, we want answers to these questions, and I am sure we will get them.

I would like to bring to the attention of my people some of the Armenian equipment the Azerbaijani Army has destroyed in recent days. Thus, the list of the destroyed Armenian equipment includes: 234 tanks have been destroyed, 36 tanks have been taken as military booty, 49 infantry fighting vehicles have been destroyed, 24 have been taken as military booty, 16 self-propelled artillery pieces have been destroyed, 190 cannons of various calibers, two "Hurricane" systems, one TOS flame-thrower, two "Elbrus" operational tactical missile complexes, one "Tochka-U", 35 "OSA" anti-aircraft missile systems, three "TOR" anti-aircraft missile complexes, five "KUB" and "KRUG" anti-aircraft missile complexes, nine radio-electronic combat systems, two S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems, 196 trucks have been destroyed, and 98 have been

taken as booty. Anyone, any specialist can calculate the price of this equipment from open media. We must and we will find answers to these questions.

The glorious Azerbaijani Army is successfully continuing its salvation mission. In recent days, I have informed my people and announced the names of the newly liberated villages. Today, with a feeling of great satisfaction and joy, I want to convey to my dear people the names of more settlements that have been liberated. The following settlements of Fuzuli district have been liberated from the occupiers – Gochahmadli village, Chiman village, Juvarli village, Pirahmadli village, Musabayli village, Ishigli village, Dadali village and Fizuli city. The city of Fizuli has been liberated from the occupiers, Fuzuli is ours, Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

I heartily congratulate all the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion. I heartily congratulate the people of Fuzuli on this occasion. Many years of longing for native land are coming to an end. We are honorably fulfilling our mission, restoring and will restore the territorial integrity of our country. The battles for Fuzuli were very hard. Time will pass and books and papers will be written about these battles. It was a battle that required great professionalism, skill, courage and self-sacrifice. Because during these 30 years, the enemy has built such a strong fortification on the line of contact that some people thought that it was impossible to liberate the city of Fuzuli from occupation. Even the most well-known military experts were of the opinion that it would take months to capture Fuzuli and free it from occupation and whether the operation would be successful was still in question. However, the victorious Azerbaijani Army was able to cope with this glorious mission and most of the villages of Fuzuli district and the city of Fuzuli have been liberated from the enemy in a short time. When we talk about the city of Fuzuli, of course, we should all know that there is nothing left of the city, no monuments, not a single safe building. For 30 years, it was in the hands of wild beasts, in the hands of predators, in the hands of jackals. All the buildings have been demolished, our religious sites have been demolished, everything has been looted, the roofs of the houses, the windows, the belongings – everything. It was as if a wild tribe had taken over the city. The remains of the city of Fuzuli are a manifestation of Armenian fascism and a witness to Armenian fascism.

We will return to Fuzuli, we will rebuild and landscape all the villages. Life will return to those villages. Just like in the past when the Azerbaijani Army liberated 22 villages of Fuzuli district, including Horadiz settlement, under the leadership of the great leader. Look at how beautiful this place is now. Horadiz settlement has become a very prosperous and modern town. Fuzuli people live in liberated villages. I can say that about half of the population of Fuzuli has been settled in the villages liberated so far, but more villages inhabited by Fuzuli people have been liberated today. Life will return there, they will return there, they will live there, they will visit the graves of their ancestors. The call to prayer will be heard in the mosques to be restored there. We are fulfilling our glorious mission. I am confident that the glorious Azerbaijani Army will continue to drive the invaders away from our lands.

The Fuzuli operation is quite symbolic. Azerbaijan has regained its historical and ancient settlement and ensured the return of tens of thousands of people to these places. At the same time, from a strategic point of view, the splitting of several lines of defense on the line of contact with Fuzuli gives us another strategic advantage. Because our armed forces located in the direction of Fuzuli have been fighting there these days. Of course, it is not a secret now where we were able to enter Fuzuli from. As a result of tremendous military professionalism and courage, we were able to liberate Fuzuli from the occupiers. Before that, the city of Jabrayil was liberated from the invaders. Before that, Hadrut was liberated from the occupiers. Many villages of Khojavand and Jabrayil districts, including Fuzuli district, were liberated from occupation. Only after that were we able to liberate the city of Fuzuli from the occupiers.

In the latest stage, the enemy has dropped his guns and fled. Today, I can say with full responsibility that the Fuzuli operation will be included in military books. In fact, not only Fuzuli operation but also other operations. According to the information I have today, military experts are already clearly saying that the Azerbaijani Army is an army with great combat capability and technical support.

It is a historic day today. The date of 17 October will remain forever not only in the memory of Fuzuli people but also in the history of the Azerbaijani state. Today, we, all the people of Azerbaijan, are writing the brightest page of our people and our state together. Today, we are writing this glorious history of solidarity, mutual support and unity. We are lucky to live in these moments. Unfortunately, tens of thousands of our refugees and IDPs who were looking forward to these moments did not live to see these days. But I am sure that their spirit is happy today because their native lands have been liberated from the occupiers.

Despite the fact that the cowardly, treacherous and vile enemy commits war crimes, fires on the civilian population and kills children as a result of today's shooting, I want to say again that we must not take revenge on civilians. We are taking revenge on the battlefield. The blood of our martyrs and civilians does not and will not remain unavenged. I warn the fascist leadership of Armenia again – leave the remaining lands of your own accord. We will throw you out of there anyway. There will be no trace of them left on those lands. We will drive them out of our lands to the end. Let them leave of their own accord!

He did not want to give up Fuzuli even though he understood perfectly well that he would not be able to keep it. He did not want to give up Jabrayil. Yesterday, the day before yesterday and today, successful operations were carried out in the direction of Jabrayil and strategic heights were taken. I do not want to say anything about that yet. I do not want to get ahead of the events. But the victorious Azerbaijani Army is achieving and will continue to achieve its goals, our territorial integrity is being restored and will be fully restored. No force can stop us. No force can stand against the will of the Azerbaijani people. Everyone should know this. No-one can stand in front of us. Let the predatory Armenian state vacate our lands. After that, a ceasefire will be ensured. A ceasefire was declared, but Ganja was bombed a day later. And which part of it? A residential settlement. Where did they hit today? Again, a residential area. When did they shoot? At night, so that more people die.

This is a crime against humanity. If the international community does not want to bring Armenia to justice for the crimes it has committed – just as no-one has brought them to justice for the Khojaly genocide – we will bring them to justice ourselves. We will punish them, and our punishment will be just. They deserve the most severe punishment. The military-political leadership of Armenia are criminals and we will punish these criminals.

The prime minister of Armenia who said that "Karabakh is Armenia", what happened, why aren't you saying that "Karabakh is Armenia" now? Come to Fuzuli, where you were exploiting our land. Come to Jabrayil, come to Hadрут, come to other liberated places and say that "Karabakh is Armenia". You are sitting there in Yerevan, making statements from there, annoying world leaders – there is no-one left you didn't phone.

Why aren't you saying that "Karabakh is Armenia"? You are afraid and you should be. But why were you so brave when you insulted the Azerbaijani people by saying that "Karabakh is Armenia, full stop"? Who did you rely on? Didn't you know that one day you will be held accountable for your actions? The day has come and is coming. Bringing Armenians from Lebanon and other countries to Shusha is a war crime that contradicts the Geneva Convention. They do it demonstratively, they show it on TV, they show Armenians coming to live and work in our ancient land. Let's see now who will come to settle in Shusha. You were building a new road with Armenia from Jabrayil. Why? You have illegally occupied that region, our Araz region, in order to settle Armenians there? You wanted to make us face facts? What was the purpose of bringing Armenians from abroad and settling them there in various ways, including through deception because Armenia has a small population? The goal is to keep our historical lands under eternal occupation, to ensure eternal occupation and Armenianize our lands. Look, they gave Fuzuli an ugly name. Let this name be a curse to you. This name will go to hell. This name no longer exists. There is no Madagiz – it is Sugovushan. We will restore our other historical names. You wanted to move the parliament of your "entity" to Shusha. Go ahead and do it now! Where is the place where you conducted the "swearing-in ceremony" of the leader of that fake gang? We have destroyed it, completely destroyed it. You put forward seven conditions to us. You were speaking to us in the language of ultimatums. Let's see what your conditions are now. What happened? You cling to people, fall at their feet begging for help in stopping Azerbaijan. Tell Azerbaijan to stop. Get out of our land and we will stop! Get the hell out of our lands! I have said this before and do not hide anything. The people of Azerbaijan know this and the international community is saying this too. I say this every day – get out and say that you will leave here tomorrow, and we will stop. We do not need to shed blood. We need lands. We will get this land by any means. Let everyone know this. The history of the last days shows this.

It is proving too costly for you, for the Armenian leadership, to insult the Azerbaijani people. Too costly. The Armenian people must finally bring the leaders of this criminal regime to justice. Rallies are already being organized in military conscription offices in Armenia. Mothers are blocking the roads and preventing their children from dying in another country. I also appealed to the Armenian people, and I am appealing to them again: Do not let your children go! What are they doing in our lands? Live in your own country. We have nothing to do with you. Go and live in your own country, do whatever you want but leave

our lands. I am confident that the Armenian people will also bring the leaders of their criminal junta to justice. We are on the path of truth, we are on the path of justice. We are right, we are fighting in our own land, we are giving martyrs on our own land. Ours is a holy war!

We have shown our strength on the battlefield, both to the enemy and to the whole world. The strength we are showing on the battlefield is underpinned by the will of the Azerbaijani people, the talent of the Azerbaijani people and our success.

I want to say again that we are a lucky people. Our generation is happy to be witnessing these happy days. I consider myself a lucky person to convey this good news to my people. As the Commander-in-Chief, I lead all the work and want to assure the people of Azerbaijan that I will continue to do my best to protect the national interests of our country and our people. No threat and no pressure can affect my will. Ours is the cause of truth. We are fighting on our own land and restoring our territorial integrity.

Long live the Azerbaijani Army! Long live the people of Azerbaijan! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev gave a video interview to Russian TASS news agency

19.10.2020 [10:40]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has given a video interview to the Russian TASS news agency.

AZERTAC presents the video interview.

- Good afternoon. We are in Baku today to meet with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. My name is Yulia Sharifulina and, on behalf of TASS, I will ask the President several questions on the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh.

- Hello, Mr. President.

- Hello.

- Thank you for agreeing to receive us. I understand that you have recently given several interviews to the media but the situation is changing fast and we observe it literally every day. We would like, of course, to dwell more on some basic issues, which, perhaps, are beyond time and which will help our audience to better understand the position of your country. We all witnessed the 11-hour negotiating marathon in Moscow. Do you think it is still possible to return to the fulfillment of the achieved peace or has it failed completely?

- We remain true to the commitments within the framework of contacts with our partners. From the very beginning and in the process of negotiations on the settlement of the conflict, we have always relied on international law, on our adherence to the resolution of the conflict by peaceful means, including the commitments Azerbaijan took upon itself after the talks in Moscow, which we aspired to and were going to implement. Unfortunately, Armenia flagrantly violated the ceasefire. Less than 24 hours after the talks, the city of Ganja was attacked. Residential areas of the sleeping city of Ganja were targeted deliberately. After the first attack – and there were two of them – the death toll was very high. In other words, Armenia violated the ceasefire in a defiant manner. Thus, it demonstrated disrespect for mediators, disrespect for the commitments it had assumed after such long negotiations in Moscow. Prior to that, after the terms of the ceasefire for the exchange of bodies, prisoners and hostages had been agreed, Armenia had also violated the ceasefire on the battlefield. However, this seemed insufficient for them and they attacked the city of Ganja. In fact, two days ago, they did the same and again at night. This is a very heinous crime. This is international terrorism. The unanimous condemnation of this bloody crime by the world community means that they will not get away with it. The UN Secretary General, the European Union and many countries at the national level have condemned this act of international terrorism.

It is not our fault that the situation is still in the hot phase. I have repeatedly said that Azerbaijan is committed to the principles of settlement. These principles have been developed over the many years of negotiations. I have confirmed in my speeches and in recent contacts with the media that if Armenia acts constructively in the process of negotiations, we are ready to suspend military operations as early as tomorrow. However, the statements we have been hearing from Yerevan completely contradict the fundamental principles developed by the OSCE Minsk Group. The Armenian leadership has recently made very dangerous statements that effectively refute the fundamental principles. In principle, all the activities of Armenia's new leadership are aimed at disrupting the process of negotiations. Not to undermine this process, but to disrupt it. I have already talked about their numerous statements, provocative actions and attacks on Azerbaijan's civilian population. Therefore, if the Armenian side finally realizes that the path of military provocations leads them to disaster, we are ready to suspend military operations and resolve the issue at the negotiating table.

- Would your country agree to the need for an urgent military meeting, as Russia says? If so, what format and with the participation of what parties could this meeting be held?

- You know, the political will of the leadership of Armenia and Azerbaijan is paramount here. There is political will on our side. I confirm our position again today. And I confirm it when we have announced the liberation of 13 more settlements in the occupied territories, when the Armenian army is essentially suffering a defeat, when Azerbaijan demonstrates its advantage on the battleground. Nevertheless, not wishing to continue the bloodshed and wishing to save people's lives, we are ready to resolve this issue by political means.

With regard to military-to-military contacts, the fundamental principles explicitly define this, and we are committed to the fundamental principles I have already mentioned. I think there is no point in repeating – it is the return of the territories occupied by the Armenian side, negotiations on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of origin, including Nagorno-Karabakh, Shusha. All of this is written in fundamental principles, and the Armenian side agreed to all of this at different stages. Therefore, the question you have just asked is covered in the fundamental principles at the end of the agreement – when all the issues related to de-occupation have been settled, the presence of foreign peacekeeping forces is envisaged. But since the key issues requiring settlement were not agreed on, the parties did not approach this issue. Therefore, there was no clear understanding of who these forces would consist of, what international organizations and what countries would be represented there. Therefore, all this has not been discussed. One thing was clear: the composition and location of these peacekeeping forces should be agreed upon by Azerbaijan and Armenia. This has not been defined either. Therefore, there is no line of contact today, the status quo has been removed, we removed it ourselves and did it within the framework of statements by the presidents of Russia, the United States and France, the repeated statements by the heads of state that the status quo was unacceptable. We were hearing these statements but did not see their implementation. Therefore, we implemented it ourselves. So there is no status quo and there is no line of contact. How can some military observers be deployed there technically and where exactly can they be deployed? After all, the situation on the battlefield changes every day. So there will be some foreign observers but where will they stand – on mountains, in valleys, on bridges? So all this requires a very detailed study. This is also a huge risk for those who deem it necessary to send their military contingent there. So all this must be agreed upon: composition, mandate, timing, goals. Of course, all of this should be done within the framework of the fundamental principles, which, as I said, are accepted by us and rejected by the Armenian side.

- But if the situation does require it, will your country agree to the introduction of Russian military observers? And if not Russian, what other countries could take part in this mission and what countries would you strongly object to?

- You know, Russia, like the United States and France, is a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, and within the framework of this mandate, the countries have very close interaction with each other. During the hot phase of the conflict, I observe both in the Western and Russian media that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is probably the only issue where there are no disagreements between these countries. And perhaps this is actually the case. Wherever we look, there are sanctions, confrontations, claims, etc., and they are also mutual. Therefore, of course, I am sure that this issue should be agreed upon within the framework of the co-chairmanship format among these countries and, after it is agreed upon, it should be presented to the parties. So it was all stated in the fundamental principles. After all, it is not us who should determine who the peacekeepers, or observers, as they prefer to be called now, will be. This will be a proposal from the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, and Azerbaijan and Armenia, for their part, can either veto this or that country or agree to it. Therefore, I do not think that a unilateral decision would correspond to the spirit of cooperation among the three co-chairing countries in determining any kind of military contingent. And most importantly – where? This is the question. The point is not whether Azerbaijan would or would not agree. We need to know the mandate: who is the sponsor, what are the functions, location and activities? Are they going to stand on the mountains or in an open field and watch who shoots first? This is dangerous in the first place. Secondly, the way it is described to us, they will be there to observe who breaks the truce. But even if they determine who breaks the truce, what next? Will these people be held accountable? Will there be criminal cases?

Therefore, first of all, it is necessary to determine the order for the implementation of fundamental principles. The Armenian side through its prime minister must clearly reaffirm its commitment. However, the Armenian side represented by the prime minister talks about everything but this. Within the framework of our parallel contacts with representatives of the Russian media, I clearly stated that we are committed to the fundamental principles that imply de-occupation, joint residence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani population in their places of residence, the return of Azerbaijanis to Shusha and other settlements of the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region. The Armenian prime minister only spoke about self-determination. So if he does not accept this and makes statements like the one he made earlier, saying that “Karabakh is Armenia, full stop”, as well as other counterproductive statements that essentially disrupted the process of negotiations, then are we being offered? To return to the status quo which lasted 30 years

and did not yield any results? If the Armenian side says that they recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, secondly, they are committed to the fundamental principles, thirdly, they agree to the withdrawal of troops from the occupied territories, then we can discuss the issue of observers. I think it can be agreed on quite quickly. But when this is not the case, what we are being offered? To stop? Not to continue the de-occupation of our territories? We are offered to make a concession to Armenia, a unilateral concession, while nothing is being offered in return. This is not fair. I believe that this is a wrong approach in relation to Azerbaijan. Let the Armenian side say, let the prime minister of Armenia, who loves to talk a lot and what he says often costs his country dearly, say: yes, there will be de-occupation, there will be withdrawal. I also suggested that they should provide a timetable for the withdrawal from the occupied territories. But then, realizing that it was technically impossible to do this within the framework of one-day negotiations in Moscow, we moved away from this position. Nevertheless, we did not hear the Armenian side say that it was ready to withdraw troops from the occupied territories. As soon as this happens, the issue of the so-called observers can be considered.

- If we talk about consistency in principle, would Azerbaijan agree to start a settlement with a phased transfer of seven districts to Azerbaijan, but keeping the Lachin corridor with Armenia until the final status of Karabakh is determined?

- You know, all this is stated in fundamental principles, and we have accepted it. Our position has always been very constructive, we have always said that yes, we proceed from the understanding that there should be contacts between people, and the Lachin corridor is a part of fundamental principles. At the same time, the fundamental principles also state that all communications are to be opened. This includes not only the Lachin corridor but also the communications between the main part of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan, and the Armenian side is to provide security guarantees for this corridor. Communications on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan are to be opened. It was also envisaged that Armenia would have unhindered ground access to the territory of the Russian Federation, which it is not without now but it would be much more convenient to do this through Azerbaijan. In this case, it would not depend on weather conditions, snowfall in the mountains, etc. So all this is part of a compromise package which envisaged de-occupation of Azerbaijani territories, the return of Azerbaijani refugees to all the lands they were expelled from – not only to seven surrounding districts but also to the territory in Nagorno-Karabakh. Before the start of the conflict, Azerbaijanis accounted for 25 percent of the entire population there. And, of course, unhindered access between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia through the Lachin corridor. We reaffirm this position.

- Mr. President, it is no secret that Russia has expressed concern over reports on the transfer of militants from the Middle East to the conflict zone, in particular from Syria and Libya. How can you comment on this?

- I have repeatedly said in my public remarks that such concerns are unfounded. So far, we have not been provided with any facts from any side. After all, such statements were made not only by Russia but also by France, and we asked for specific facts, concrete evidence that would prove that we have invited terrorists here. So far, apart from words, no facts have been provided. Not to me as President, not to the heads of our secret service, not to the leaders of the Ministry of Defense – not a single fact. If there are such facts as this is being declared, why isn't this provided to us? They refer to some newspaper publications, but you can write whatever you want now. Therefore, this is not exactly the approach we accept and approve. This is first. Secondly, as I have already said, the Azerbaijani army has proved its combat effectiveness both on the battlefield and in terms of technical capacity. We have practically destroyed most of Armenia's military-technical potential located in the occupied territories. I have provided these figures. More than 230 tanks have been destroyed mainly by drones but also by modern anti-tank warfare systems – the self-directing Spike missiles. I do not conceal that. As of yesterday, we captured 36 tanks as booty. A huge amount of other equipment has been destroyed, including the most modern anti-aircraft missile systems "S-300" – in fact, not just one launcher. About 40 anti-aircraft missile systems "OSA", "TOR" installations, which should actually work against drones, but the drones have destroyed them. Did terrorists do that? Have they come from somewhere in Syria? Today, when our army is liberating territories, where are they? Who saw these terrorists? These are our soldiers and officers. We have 100,000 soldiers in the regular Azerbaijani army, not counting the reservists. We did not even announce mobilization. What for? We do not need that. We have announced a partial mobilization. I do not want to provide any figures of how much we have attracted, but we mainly use them for monitoring and control over the already liberated

territories. We are not letting reservists into battle. We are using them in the territories we have liberated in order to prevent sabotage attempts of the Armenian side. So there are no facts and there is no need. There are only gossips, rumors. Frankly speaking, I regret that this is being circulated. Thus, an attempt is made to cast a shadow on Azerbaijan. On the other hand, we understand the Armenian side's humiliation. It had been boasting and bragging of its invincible army all these years, but when we drove them out of our lands so fast that they fling up their heels, of course, they want to imagine that this is not done by the Azerbaijani army but some terrorists or some other countries.

Not a single country is involved in the conflict on our side. There are no terrorists on our side. As for the opposite side, the Armenian side, we have conveyed to the Russian side our concerns that during the active phase of the confrontation a huge amount of weapons has been transferred from Russian cities to the territory of Armenia. We have data, we have flight maps, we have the listing of weapons. All this was brought to the attention of the Russian side. This, of course, raises a lot of questions and bewilderment in our society. Therefore, the situation is like this. If necessary, we can also publish the list of supplies Armenia has received from Russia during this time, specify what transport vehicles were used to deliver them, and which airlines delivered them. These were mostly illegal supplies. We have officially applied to ICAO. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan has appealed to ICAO. We have provided information about the transport vessels of certain companies. In fact, there have also been media reports that lethal weapons are being delivered to Armenia under the guise of humanitarian cargo and cargo of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. Since both Georgia and Iran have closed their airspace for military cargo, such smuggling methods are used. We suggested to the Russian side that this was being done by means of smuggling because it is hard for us to believe that Russia, a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group and a country that must maintain neutrality, just like France and the United States, is arming the Armenian side during the active phase of the conflict. According to our information, large Russian entrepreneurs of Armenian origin are involved in this scheme. Well-known arms dealers who are under international sanctions are also involved. Our appeal to the Russian side was, among other things, aimed at sorting out this issue. Because if Russian weapons are smuggled and paid for in cash, then we need to figure out how this can be possible. These are the concerns we have, and our concerns are based on facts. As for the so-called terrorists, these are just words.

-Ilham Heydar oglu, in the past 26 years the world could not understand what the final agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Karabakh might look like. How do you see this, and are any concessions still possible for the sake of peace?

- You know, I want to say again that although the Minsk Group co-chairs have not achieved any result and are rightly criticized by the Azerbaijani public for that, I have to say as a person who has been dealing with this issue almost on a daily basis for the last 17 years and spending a huge amount of my time on finding solutions that the Minsk Group has been trying. It was providing proposals and did not stay idle. Therefore, I reject such unfounded accusations. This is not the case. During my contacts with the previous leadership of Armenia, with the previous two presidents, we took major steps forward. We made progress in agreeing on issues that seemed completely impossible to agree on. This was all based on the desire to achieve a result, the desire to reach a settlement through a compromise. It is a different matter though that at a certain stage, when we came too close to a settlement, the Armenian side took a step back. This is also a fact although they have always tried to blame us for this. But at the last moment they refused to return Kalbajar and Lachin. The other five districts had been agreed upon long ago and we were already discussing when Kalbajar and Lachin would be returned. So we were discussing the timing. Neither me nor the Minsk Group had any doubts that this issue had been resolved. I think the former co-chairs of the Minsk Group who were involved in this at the time can confirm this. But then the Armenian side took a step back, and the issue of transferring Kalbajar and Lachin hung in the air. In other words, a mechanism was proposed that involved these two districts forever remaining under Armenian control, which I categorically could not agree to.

Therefore, returning to what you asked, the Minsk Group has created a basis for a settlement. It consists in the de-occupation, the return of refugees, the opening of communications, the joint residence of the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities, which fully complies with the norms of both international law and human morality in general. Because when one of the Armenian presidents spoke about ethnic incompatibility of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, he once again demonstrated his fascist essence. Then how can Azerbaijanis and Armenians live together in Russia, have a common business and mixed families there?

How can Armenians and Azerbaijanis live together in some Georgian villages and celebrate both Muslim and Christian holidays? How do thousands of Armenians live with dignity in Azerbaijan as our citizens? Therefore, such theses of fascist nature did not contribute to a settlement, of course.

So all the fundamental principles I have talked about plus the opening of communications form the basis. The Minsk Group co-chairs support the Azerbaijani position. But the current Armenian leadership took a different path. The prime minister said that not a centimeter of land would be given to Azerbaijan. They have published maps of the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh republic”, which also included seven districts outside Nagorno-Karabakh. They have changed all the names of our cities and our villages. What we saw on the battlefield – it was not easy to break through these defense lines they had been building for 30 years – we saw that they were not going to give up these territories. Because so much had been invested there, so much had been invested in engineering communications and fortifications! This did not at all mean that they were going to leave these lands. When the hot phase of the conflict ends, we will provide full information about what they had built there.

Therefore, I want to say once again that full responsibility for what is happening now lies squarely with Pashinyan. This is someone who not only happened to come in power by chance, but also brought a lot of suffering and grief to the Azerbaijani and the Armenian people. He is a foster child of Soros. This is a person who, in his previous life, has always opposed Armenia's cooperation with Russia. His party was called “Exit” – exit from the CSTO, exit from the EurAsEC. Pashinyan's team is almost entirely made up of representatives of non-governmental organizations funded by the West – the Soros Foundation, Amnesty International, Transparency, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House. People represented in Armenian government today used to throw eggs at the Russian Embassy and chanted slogans like “Get out, Russian invaders”. Therefore, to be honest, I am surprised that a certain part of the Russian political establishment supports this criminal terrorist regime. The fact that they hit the sleeping city of Ganja twice with ballistic missiles and deliberately targeted residential areas in order to kill as many people as possible is a bloody crime. They are being brought to account for this crime on the battlefield, and if they don't change their minds, their end will be very deplorable. Therefore, returning to your question, we are committed to the fundamental principles. We believe that a settlement is possible, but for this to happen the Armenian side must, before it is too late and while it is only on its knees before us, accept these principles and move the conflict from the hot phase to the stage of political settlement.

- In conclusion, it would be logical to ask if are you ready to come to Moscow to meet with your counterpart from Armenia with the mediation of the Russian Federation?

- You know, I have been to Moscow many times. In this case, I have not received such an invitation, so this question is not for me. President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin personally and Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev before him have repeatedly held trilateral meetings between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan. But ever since power in Armenia passed into the hands of the conditional Soros, such contacts have ceased. Russia has always played an important role in the settlement of the conflict, and I have spoken about this. There are objective reasons for this – both historical and geographical in nature. And also because Russia has been active in our region for many decades and there is a high level of interaction. Therefore, we are ready for any contacts. In fact, when the suggestion was made to organize a meeting of foreign ministers, we agreed immediately. After all, this also speaks of our position. Then the Azerbaijani army had already successfully liberated a part of strategic territories. The conflict had already been under way for more than 10 days and it was quite clear to everyone who was capable of doing what. So it was not too difficult to guess the further course of developments. Despite this, we did not vide time or refuse. We said – yes, we are ready. And I said when speaking with the President of Russia that I was sending our minister. By the way, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Geneva at the time. He was negotiating with the Minsk Group. During the hot phase, our minister was in Geneva while the Armenian minister never got there although he should have been there too. Therefore, we are always ready to meet in Moscow or elsewhere in order to put an end to the confrontation but also to find ways of settlement. We also want peace but, unlike Armenia, we want territories that rightfully belong to us.

- Mr. President, thank you for your answers.

-Thank you.

President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

20.10.2020 [14:50]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has addressed the nation.
AZERTAC presents the address.

Nationwide address of President Ilham Aliyev

- Dear fellow compatriots. The victorious Azerbaijani Army is gaining new victories on the battlefield. These victories make every Azerbaijani citizen happy. The enemy, which has been occupying our lands for almost 30 years, sees the strength of the Azerbaijani Army on the battlefield. We are fighting on our own land, defending our own land, and we will continue to drive the invaders out of our lands.

Our people are looking forward to more news from the battlefield and the frontline. I am very happy. I am a very lucky person to be able to convey this good news to the people of Azerbaijan. The liberation of every village, every city and every strategic height from the occupiers requires great professionalism, courage, bravery and heroism. Our servicemen are becoming martyrs. May Allah rest the souls of all our martyrs in peace! Our martyrs will always live in our hearts. Our servicemen are getting wounded on the battlefield. May Allah send healing to all our wounded soldiers! At the same time, the hated enemy is constantly firing on our settlements. Every day, our cities and villages along the frontline come under fire from the hated enemy. Tartar district is particularly exposed to cowardly fire. At the same time, the enemy fires on Aghdam, Goranboy, Aghjabadi, Barda, other cities and districts. As a result of the cowardly shelling of the city of Ganja, civilians were killed – children, women, the elderly. But it does not matter to the enemy. There is no difference for them. They are defeated on the battlefield, they are unable to stand in front of the Azerbaijani Army and commit crimes against the civilian population in front of the whole world in order to stop us and strike at us. The whole world sees what an ugly and savage enemy Azerbaijan is liberating its native lands from. For 30 years, they sat on our lands and tried to challenge us. For 30 years, they exploited our lands, exploited our natural resources. Theft and looting are their trademarks. Suffice it to look at the destroyed villages and cities to see what savages we are facing. There is not a single safe building in the occupied and already liberated lands. All buildings have been demolished and looted. Our historical sites, mosques and graves have been destroyed, looted and desecrated. They thought that the Azerbaijani people would put up with this situation. They thought that these lands would be occupied forever. They changed the names of our cities, changed the borders of our districts, changed the names of our villages, wanted to Armenianize our lands but could not achieve this. They could not break the will of the Azerbaijani people.

Every Azerbaijani who has not seen their native lands, who opened their eyes to the world after the occupation lived with a desire to return to these lands. We saw it in the example of Jojug Marjanly. Young people born after the occupation, each of them cherished the dream of returning to Jojug Marjanly. I am sure that the citizens of Azerbaijan will return to all the lands liberated from the occupiers. They will live in those lands again and build there in peace and tranquility – just as the cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people has been created in all the once occupied lands. But the hated enemy wanted to destroy this heritage, destroyed our mosques. When we built a mosque similar to the Shusha mosque in the village of Jojug Marjanly and opened it, I said that they may have destroyed the buildings of mosques but these mosques live in our hearts, and one day all our destroyed mosques will be restored, all our cities and villages will be restored. We are on the threshold of the Great Return, and the Azerbaijani state will do its best to ensure that citizens of Azerbaijan return to the occupied and liberated lands and live there in peace and tranquility. Life will be revived in these lands.

Our IDPs have lived all these years with a dream although many of them have wonderful conditions. As you know, this year alone we plan to provide 7,000 apartments to the IDPs. More than 300,000 IDPs have been provided with houses and apartments. They are grateful to us for this care, they have expressed their gratitude in our numerous meetings. But at the same time, I knew myself and they asked me to return them to their land. They understood that this was a difficult issue, they were perfectly aware that this required certain geopolitical conditions. They believed in me, and I told them that we would return them to those lands. I told them that I knew what to do, when and how. The trust people placed in me allowed us

the opportunity to resolve this issue. I declare again that I keep all the promises I make. I am true to all the promises I make. The main goal of my activity as President is the return of Azerbaijani lands, the restoration of territorial integrity, and we are doing it on the battlefield today.

The negotiations did not yield any results for almost 30 years. The fortifications Armenia built in the occupied territories show that they did not intend to give up these lands. They simply deceived us and international mediators. They were simply biding time, while at the same time conducting illegal settlement of the occupied territories. They settled thousands of people in the city of Lachin, thousands more in Kalbajar. They lived in our villages we have liberated today – in Fuzuli, Jabrayil and other districts. Most of those villages are destroyed, but in some houses they lived on our lands. Having carried out ethnic cleansing against the Azerbaijanis, having committed genocide against the Azerbaijanis and having expelled our citizens from their native lands, they held a “referendum”, which is completely contrary to human morality, laws and international law. No-one recognizes the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh republic”. Now they are trying to get countries of the world to recognize the so-called criminal entity. They have lost their mind. They do not understand that no-one will do it. They do not understand that every country that does this can no longer be considered a friendly country for Azerbaijan. Not only that, we will cut all ties with such a country. They lost their mind. They are trying to restore the status quo now. I have said there is no status quo. We have destroyed the status quo and we have done what is right. We have been waiting for about 30 years. Ten years ago, at the level of the Minsk Group co-chairs and their presidents, a statement was made that the status quo was unacceptable. We also supported it, we liked it, we had high hopes, and then some progress at the negotiating table raised our hopes. But the hated enemy simply deceived us and the international community. This is disrespect for international mediators.

We changed the status quo by showing strength on the battlefield. I said this before these clashes, I have said this several times. Unfortunately, international law does not work in international relations. If it did, four UN Security Council resolutions would have been implemented long ago. We waited for 20 years for these resolutions to be implemented. They simply remained on paper. Why? Because there was no political will, there was no mechanism for the implementation of these resolutions. The hated enemy thought that they could continue to ignore them, that they would continue to flout international law, that they can continue to commit their ugly deeds on our lands. We have forced them. Our fist is there not only to smash the enemy’s head. Our fist is a fist of unity, the unity of our people, a fist of focused activities, the adoption of decisions and resolutions at the international level that benefit us and reflect justice.

In some cases, I saw before these events that Azerbaijani citizens, including the IDPs, believed that although such diplomatic successes were certainly important, they did not provide a solution. I always explained to them that this was an issue that should be resolved within the framework of international law. Therefore, we must work with all leading international organizations to expand the legal framework for resolving this conflict. UN Security Council resolutions did not work. We have made great efforts, the UN General Assembly, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other organizations have adopted resolutions. The document we have initialed with the European Union also supports the inviolability of our borders, our sovereignty and the territorial integrity of our country. That is the basis for resolving this conflict. This is why the Armenian leadership, acting like a beggar, like an inane one – I am sorry but they are worthy of any name – sends letters to all international organizations day and night, makes statements and asks why they remain silent. Why should they speak up? They have already adopted these resolutions and decisions, and Azerbaijan conducts military operations on its territory recognized by the international community. We do not carry out any operations on the territory of Armenia – we have no such plans – even though they have bombed Ganja twice from the territory of Armenia. We did not respond to them in their fashion. We responded on the battlefield. I said that we would take revenge on them on the battlefield. We will not leave the blood of our martyrs unavenged. The main goal of our activity in international organizations was to improve and expand this legal framework, and we were able to achieve this.

Therefore, the Armenian leadership must think carefully. They are already on their knees. We have brought them to their knees. We have shown them the place they deserve. We will drive them out of our lands! We will drive them out! Good news comes in every day. Every day, our flag is raised in a new settlement. This is the strength of the Azerbaijani state, the Azerbaijani people. For 30 years, the Armenian leadership has been spreading myths about a “strong army”, myths about an “invincible Armenian army”. Where is this “invincible Armenian army?” Look at the way it runs away from us. It was all a myth, it was

all a lie. We have exposed it. They insulted us for 30 years. For 30 years, they had been destroying our sites in the occupied territories and trying to erase our historical and cultural heritage. Why has the international community not imposed sanctions on the aggressor state for 30 years? I have repeatedly said that sanctions should be imposed. This country, the leadership of this country does not want to leave these lands of its own free will. They deceive us, imitate a process of negotiations. They are not trustworthy, and I was right. Look at the fortifications they built there. Will a country that builds such fortifications, a country that spends so much money on them ever get out of there? If they wanted to leave, they would not have built them. So every word they say is a lie. Today, the leaders of their state incessantly spread lies and fabrications about Azerbaijan and the events on the battlefield – as if someone is fighting for us. The Azerbaijani people, Azerbaijani youth, Azerbaijani soldiers are teaching them a lesson. We are fighting alone and everyone knows that. They can't come to terms with that because their myth is falling apart, the myth that formed the basis of their ideology. They have been lying about history. Unfortunately, they have succeeded in convincing many countries of their historical lies. The lies about Khojaly – as if Azerbaijan committed the Khojaly genocide itself. Regarding the bombing of Ganja, their officials have made a false statement that Armenia did not organize the rocket fire. They have neither conscience nor morality. They don't even have the brain. If they had the brain, they would say: look, this is the starting point and the trajectory of this ballistic missile. It can be followed by the world's leading countries, where it was fired from and where it landed. Ballistic missiles are programmed with a combat mission. It did not accidentally fall into that residential area at night. It was done deliberately. They have lost their mind. They want to continue to deceive the world. Who else fired this rocket on Ganja? We ourselves? Just as they lied that Azerbaijan committed the Khojaly genocide itself, they are lying again now. He lies to the whole world. He lies in all of his interviews. We will continue to expel these liars. They see who is who now. They see that we were teaching them a lesson they will never forget. Now they are asking for help. They are calling for help now! So where is your “victorious army”? Where is your “invincible army”? Armenia's drunken prime minister was dancing on our sacred Jidir plain. He should have thought that this insult would affect the people of Azerbaijan? He thought that no-one would touch them. He thought that all countries would continue to defend them, world Armenians, Armenian lobbies and some of their friendly countries. This is why they have gone astray, this is why they have grown impudent. We showed them their place, hit them on the head so hard that they are unlikely ever to recover. We have almost destroyed their army and equipment. They are running away. And they will keep running.

In short, our superiority on the battlefield is no longer a secret. We are on the right path. Ours is the cause of justice. We are fighting on our own land, giving martyrs and restoring our territorial integrity. These steps will be continued to be taken. Armenia must declare before it is too late that it is withdrawing from the occupied territories. After that the fighting may stop.

Every time I address my people, I bring good news. At the same time, almost every day I mention the names of new villages and cities liberated from occupation on my Twitter account, through Twitter. I know that the people of Azerbaijan are waiting for this news every day! Every day and every hour, people wait for this news to come out. But I want my dear people to know that the capture of every village and every height requires great courage. Because not only the fortifications built there but also the military terrain in the liberated lands are more favorable for the Armenians. We are fighting against their fortifications, their cannons and missiles, as well as the natural terrain. We are liberating our lands inch by inch from the occupiers. It is very difficult.

The day will come and we will provide detailed information about that. I am sure that the people of Azerbaijan understand that we are saying whatever is possible today. The fighting is going on, and we want this fighting to end and our territorial integrity to be restored soon. Therefore, I think that the volume of information provided to the Azerbaijani public is sufficient.

Staying true to this beautiful tradition, I would like to share new information with the people of Azerbaijan. I will share with my dear nation information about the enemy's destroyed equipment and booty.

Thus, 241 enemy tanks have been destroyed, 39 tanks have been taken as military booty – so a total of 280 tanks. However, there are still more tanks, both in the occupied territories and in Armenia. Where did they get so many tanks? This contradicts the international conventions governing all this. Why didn't the institutions that were supposed to monitor these conventions pay attention to that? We say that 241 tanks have been destroyed – we will organize their demonstration later – and 39 tanks have been taken over in good condition. Our soldiers are sitting in these tanks and firing at the enemy with their own tanks.

Fifty infantry fighting vehicles have been destroyed and 24 have been taken as booty and are in our hands. Seventeen self-propelled artillery pieces have been destroyed, 198 artillery pieces have been destroyed, 58 mortars have been destroyed, 12 mortars have been taken as booty, 25 grenade-launchers have been seized as military booty, 53 anti-tank vehicles have been destroyed, 70 Grad installations have been destroyed, two "Hurricane" and 2 Multiple Rocket Launchers have been destroyed, one "TOS" has been destroyed, four "S-300" anti-aircraft missile systems have been destroyed. Last time I shared this information with the Azerbaijani public, we had destroyed two "S-300" anti-aircraft missile systems. To date, we have destroyed four complexes. The cost of each complex is well known. They are very expensive military equipment. Three "TOR" anti-aircraft missile systems have been destroyed. About 40 "OSA" anti-aircraft missile systems have been destroyed. Five "KUB" and "KRUG" anti-aircraft missile systems have been destroyed. Six unmanned aerial vehicles, two operational-tactical missile systems Elbrus, one ballistic missile, one Tochka-U missile, eight radio-electronic means of combat have been destroyed, 198 trucks have been destroyed, including 15 full of ammunition, 102 trucks have been seized as military booty. We will continue to destroy the military equipment of the enemy. Whatever they have left will also be destroyed.

And now, I am very proud to announce the liberation of our settlements my dear people are looking forward to.

Fuzuli district – names of liberated villages: Dordchinar, Kurdlar, Yukhari Abdurrahmanli, Garghabazar, Ashaghi Veysalli, Yukhari Aybasanli.

Jabrayil district - liberated villages: Safarsha, Hasangaydi, Fughanli, Imambagli, Dash Veysalli, Aghtapa, Yarahmadli.

Khojavand district – the list of liberated settlements: Aghjakand, Mulkudara, Dashbashi, Gunashli (former name of Gunashli village was Norashen), Vang. I am giving this village a new Azerbaijani name. From now on, Vang village should be called Chinari village. Blessed be the name!

Zangilan district. The glorious Azerbaijani Army has also entered the territory of Zangilan district and liberated settlements. The liberated settlements in the territory of Zangilan district: Havalı village, Zarnali village, Mammadbayli village, Hakari village, Sharifan village, Mughanli village and Zangilan city! Zangilan is ours! Karabakh is ours!

Dear nation, dear people of Zangilan, Fuzuli, Khojavand, Jabrayil and other occupied districts. We are fulfilling our mission. We are giving a worthy response to the enemy. We are punishing the enemy. The enemy is helpless. We are breaking the enemy's back and we will break it!

Karabakh is ours! Long live Azerbaijan! Long live the people of Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Japan's Nikkei newspaper

21.10.2020 [17:22]

As reported, on October 21, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Japan's Nikkei newspaper.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

- About the Karabakh conflict. Now foreign ministers from both Azerbaijan and Armenia are to visit Washington DC on Friday. What do you expect from that meeting. Are you ready for trilateral talk with some conditions?

-Actually, as you know, the United States, Russia and France are three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group which has a mandate to facilitate, to find a solution to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Therefore, it's natural that our ministers meet in these three capitals. These kind of meetings happened before, many times. And you know that there have been a visit to Moscow and meeting in Moscow. So, it is a continuation of the discussions on the peaceful settlement of the conflict. Of course, now situation on the ground have changed. The status quo no longer exists, the line of contact does not exist either. Therefore, of course, I think that now Armenian leadership must be more reasonable, and to commit itself to liberation of the occupied territories. So, our main objective at these discussions will be to find out whether the Armenian leadership is ready to liberate our territories or not, and if ready, then when?

-Are you also invited to Moscow by President Putin?

-No.

-If invited are you ready to go?

-I have been many times invited by President Putin. And I visited Moscow many times some years even several times a year. Therefore, it is obvious, between partner countries and neighbors these high level contacts are common. And President Putin also visited Azerbaijan many times.

-If there is any progress on Friday between the ministers, is it possible to have a trilateral meeting in Moscow with Armenian prime minister also joining?

-Well, of course it is possible. Because this kind of meetings happened before. It depends on what will be the agenda if this kind of meeting is going to take place. Because with this Armenian government unfortunately, the prospects for peaceful settlement are very remote. Because very counter-productive and provocative statements and actions on behalf of Armenian leadership made actual negotiations senseless. Because the main topic on negotiation table always has been liberation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions. And when Armenian prime minister declares that "Karabakh is Armenia", when he declares that "Azerbaijan must negotiate with Nagorno-Karabakh's so-called authorities", and when he orders ballistic missile strike on a peaceful city of Ganja and daily attacks on other cities of Azerbaijan, there is not much room for negotiations. Therefore, we had to prove Armenian government that they cannot afford any longer to make these aggressive steps without any punishment. We are punishing them on the ground. We are liberating our territories.

Every day almost I announce new cities and villages which have been liberated from Armenian occupation. Armenia is suffering very bitter defeat on the battlefield. Therefore, of course, they must be more reasonable, and definitely, the matter of liberation of the territories is happening. We wanted to achieve it through peaceful talks. But due to Armenian unconstructive position and provocative steps it was not possible. Therefore, we are now liberating our territories on the battlefield.

-Would you say the second ceasefire has already failed or ended? Would you say the battles are still going on?

-Second attempts to achieve ceasefire failed because two minutes after the time when ceasefire had to be efficient they violated the ceasefire. They again, attacked our peaceful cities, this morning from 6 am until 8 am they launched more than 100 times their shells on peaceful city of Tartar which suffered mostly and they attack our military position. They wanted to regain the territories which have already been liberated. As you know, after the first attempt of ceasefire in less than 24 hours, they attacked from the territory of Armenia with ballistic missile, second largest city of Azerbaijan – Ganja, which is a war crime. And the Armenian government will be responsible for that. So, they violate the ceasefire. I always say that ceasefire cannot be achieved unilaterally. If we are attacked, we must not only defend ourselves, but also launch a counter-attack. And I can tell you after they violated ceasefire second time, we liberated the city

of Zangilan, and many villages. So, the more time passes on the battlefield, the more territories we liberate. Therefore, Armenian government should think seriously about their behavior and make a strong commitment if they want the ceasefire to be efficient. First, not to violate it, second, not to attempt to regain the territories which we already liberated, and make a commitment about liberation of occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

-The ceasefires so far had been for humanitarian purposes, including exchange of captives and bodies. So, do you think that means ceasefire, maybe there will be another one, but it will be over once exchange of captives are done?

Is there a substantial ceasefire that will hold or is it just a temporary one, if there is any?

-It was announced on humanitarian grounds, and also as you know in Moscow declaration there was a reference to substantive negotiations. And the fact that the format of negotiations is unchanged, which means that there will be no more attempts from Armenian side to try to integrate the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh authorities” on negotiation table. This was rejected by us, and by the Minsk Group. Therefore, of course, if Armenia commits to negotiations and with a strong commitment to liberate the territories which they so far did not announce then, this ceasefire will be a long-term. Because we want to resolve this problem peacefully. But if, they will try to use ceasefire in order to mobilize their resources, in order to get additional foreign military assistance and to launch a new attack on us, of course, this ceasefire will not last long. It depends on them.

-So, in order to get on the table of negotiations would you demand Armenia to agree to withdraw at least some of maybe the seven regions in advance, before any negotiation?

-They must make a strong commitment that they will liberate these territories. Because, this is the part of the basic principles which have been agreed between two countries with the facilitation of the Minsk Group. Basic principles say that the occupied territories must be returned to Azerbaijan and our refugees and internally displaced persons must return to all the occupied territories, including territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, and including territory of ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha. Therefore, the Armenian government must clearly declare that they are committed to this principles, they will liberate these territories, and then of course, negotiations will start. We do not put a pre-condition now that territories must be liberated first and then negotiations started. We, at this moment demand from Armenian side, from prime minister personally, the person who is responsible for this violence and is responsible for war crimes against peaceful Azerbaijanis, we demand from him personally saying Armenia will liberate the occupied territories. After that of course, the resolution of the conflict will be transformed from the battlefield to the negotiation table.

-Would you be ready for negotiation maybe if Armenia says they are ready to withdraw or liberate five regions first?

-All the regions of Azerbaijan must be liberated. All of them. Of course we can talk about the timing and in the basic principles there were certain ideas about timing on which stage the first regions on which stage the second part of the regions. So, this can be discussed. But it is obvious that all the occupied territories must be returned.

-And this has to be announced before.

-And all Azerbaijanis must return to their ancient lands.

-What would you say to Russia's proposal of sending monitoring teams, or what about international monitors?

-International monitors, our peace-keeping forces is part of the basic principles. But it is the last part, one of the last issues, which had to be addressed and definitely both sides Azerbaijan and Armenia should agree on who will be those international observers, or peacekeepers. Therefore, we did not seriously discuss this issue in the framework of negotiations. I think that the Minsk Group co-chairs, three countries will definitely make proposal on their behalf about what composition, the number of so-called observers, when and where they are going to be deployed? Because it is also important from technical point of view. Because now it is an active phase of combat operations. Where these observers or peacekeepers will be deployed? Their life can be under risk. And what will be their mandate? Who will give the mandate to them? And it is clear that when we talk about that we talk about the territory of Azerbaijan. It is not territory of Armenia. Therefore, of course, we must have a decisive say about that. Therefore, of course, all these issues must be addressed. In principle, we are not rejecting it. But of course, we will put our conditions when time will come.

-Speaking of Minsk Group, Turkey criticizes Minsk Group as brain dead. Would you agree?

-I said recently that the Minsk Group did not produce any result for 30 years. At the same time, I said that with the facilitation of the Minsk Group, with the previous Armenian governments we managed to make progress, not a big progress but still progress. But if one group of countries for 30 years cannot produce results, it speaks for itself. And also, the co-chairs of the Minsk Group are permanent members of the UN Security Council. And the UN security Council with participation of these countries and with the voting of these countries adopted four resolutions demanding complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territories. That's a question why these resolutions are not implemented because the Minsk Group co-chairs and permanent members are the same countries. It is an open question.

-Among the Minsk Group co-chairs, what would you say to Russia? What would you say to Russia's role as a leading mediator? How would you say has Russia been fair?

-Three co-chairs of the Minsk Group have the same rights, and the same mandate. Therefore, as far as I know among these countries they did not choose a leader. They are all equal and we look at them as mediators. If any country assumes the role of mediator, this country must be neutral. And, if it is not neutral, it cannot be a mediator. The level of neutrality is another question, which of course, will be addressed at the proper time. But, I think the Minsk group co-chairs will play their role, especially now, when Armenia is almost defeated on the battlefield in order to stop violence, and to implement mandate which was for 28 years not implemented.

-Do you want Turkey to have more say in the Caucasus affairs and be much more active in this negotiation process?

-It depends of course on the political agenda of Turkey. I cannot speak on behalf of Turkey. What I want to say is that of course, we always, strongly support Turkish active involvement in the regional issues and actually, this involvement is obvious. Turkey plays important role now not only in our region, not only in the Caucasus, but in a broader region and in the world. It is a reality, and it is a very good reality for us. Because for us Turkey is a brotherly country, our closest ally and friend. And de facto, Turkey is already involved of course, from the legal point of view also as a member of the Minsk Group. I said once in one of the interviews that Turkey could have been even a co-chair. If today, we would have been selecting the co-chairs definitely, Azerbaijan would have supported the Turkish candidacy and I am sure Turkey would have insisted on being a co-chair. In 1992, unfortunately it didn't happen. So, this is a legal part. And then, a practical part, as you know presidents of Turkey and Russia, their foreign ministers, defense ministers talked, met, discussed this issue. Therefore, if somebody says that Turkey should not be there, as Armenia says, it's none of Armenian business, Turkey is already there and must be involved, because it will bring stability. And also, Turkey I think is the only country which has a border with three Caucasian countries. No other country has a border with three of them. Then, of course, Turkey must be actively involved, Turkey is involved and we strongly support it.

-Karabakh is by international law Azerbaijan's territory. But at the same time there are many Armenian inhabitants. Can you guarantee once Azerbaijan gets back its control, Armenian inhabitants can live safely with equal rights?

-Yes, definitely. And I already many times during this active phase of the conflict made statements in this regard that those Armenians who live in Nagorno-Karabakh are our citizens and their security, their rights will be totally provided as long as the rights of all other people of Azerbaijan. And I can tell you that today, in Azerbaijan we have thousands of people of Armenian origin, unlike Armenia, where there is no Azerbaijanis and 99% of Armenia are ethnic Armenians. So, no national minority, can live and survive there. So, they expelled all the nationalities which used to live on the territory of today's Armenian Republic. The biggest community were Azerbaijanis. In the beginning of the 20th century, the city of Yerevan was 70 percent inhabited by Azerbaijanis. They destroyed all our historical, religious monuments. They destroyed the traces of Azerbaijani culture, not only in Yerevan but also in many other regions of today's Armenia. And by the way, Azerbaijani Democratic Republic which was established on May 28, 1918, on May 29th decided unfortunately, that was a big mistake which cannot be justified, to give Yerevan to Armenia as a capital. So, they destroyed all our religious and cultural heritage, they destroyed our mosques, they destroyed our monuments, but here in the center of Baku there is an Armenian church with many Armenian books. And many Armenians, thousands of them live today in Baku and in other parts of Azerbaijan. With respect to the point that you said that many Armenians who lived there, according to our information, the real population of territory which is occupied, including former Nagorno-Karabakh

Autonomous District is around 65 thousand people. It is not a big community. But before the war in the beginning of 1990s there have been more than 40 thousand Azerbaijanis, who lived in Nagorno-Karabakh, mainly in Shusha, but also in Khankandi, in Khojaly, the city which suffered Armenian genocide, genocide committed by Armenians, and many other cities. So, they committed ethnic cleansing against us. We never did it. And even during these clashes, we did not respond the same way. We did not attack with ballistic missiles, neither the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, nor territory of Armenia. And I said that we will take revenge but we will take revenge on the battlefield. So, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh can be absolutely sure that their security will be provided. And after the criminal junta in Nagorno-Karabakh is thrown away, they, as Azerbaijani citizens will live better. They will live in dignity, they will live in peace, and we will provide all the social and economic advantages for them, as we do for any other people in our country.

-When you get back Nagorno-Karabakh would you respect their rights of self-determination as stated in Madrid principles. Do you agree to referendum?

No, of course not. There will be no referendum, in Nagorno-Karabakh we will never agree on that. We did not agree on that during the time of negotiations and now, when we regained big part of the territory, it is out of question. With respect to self-determination, Armenian people have already self-determined themselves. They have an independent Armenian state. Imagine what will happen if Armenians will self-determine themselves anywhere where they live. How many small Armenias will be in the world? This is a counter-productive approach. Self-determination is an important factor of international law. But it should not violate the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. There are different types of self-determination. There are different types of communities. And they could be cultural autonomy for instance. We see these examples in developed countries of Europe. Where there are certain rights of people in their municipalities, in their communities, as in any part of Azerbaijan of course, Armenians who live in Azerbaijan can have this form of communication. But never we will allow the creation of the second Armenian state on the territory of Azerbaijan. This is out of question. In other words, there will be no referendum, never.

-Reportedly, Armenia is recruiting Lebanese, Syrian Armenians. At the same time, NGO namely, Syrian observatory for human rights claims that many ethnic Turkmen fighters from Syria are now in the battlefield alongside with your forces, would you say that is true?

-No, this is not true. First, I would like to say the fact that Armenia recruited mercenaries and fighters from the Middle East is not a secret. And even Armenian prime Minister admitted it. But he said that they are native Armenians. First, nobody knows whether they are native Armenians or not, and we have information that representatives of different nationalities are now fighting on Armenian side. And second, if the person is ethnic Armenian but citizen of other country does not mean that he is not a mercenary. Among those who have been eliminated on the battlefield, there are people with Lebanese passport, with Canadian passport. We have evidence about citizens of France, United States of Armenian origin. But citizens of these countries and citizens of some countries of former Soviet Union are fighting against us together with citizens of the countries of the Middle East. Armenia used mercenaries during the first Karabakh War. This is not a secret. Some of them have been eliminated by Azerbaijan and they erased a big monument in their honor, monuments in the honor of international terrorists. This shows that Armenia is a terrorist state. With respect to Azerbaijan, first this so-called Syrian observatory NGO is not a credible organization. We know about many fakes which they spread over with respect to the war in Syria. So, there is no credibility, trust to this politically motivated so-called NGO. First we need to check who is financing and then understand who is behind these rumors. Second, not a single evidence have been presented to us by any country. Only rumors, only unjustified statements, and I demanded proof. I said okay, now it's more than twenty days that we are in the active phase of the conflict. Where are there proofs? Give us the proofs. No proofs. Therefore, these rumors must be stopped. Azerbaijan is fighting itself. We don't need any foreign fighters. We have enough people, enough soldiers and officers in our regular army. We have ten million population. If we need additional fighters we will announce mobilization, we will recruit. So, there is no need for that and it is absolutely false information.

-So, as you said repeatedly, no jihadists and even no Turkmen?

No, there can be people of Azerbaijani origin coming from other countries. We do not exclude it. Because we have many volunteers, people who voluntarily want to defend their country. We cannot exclude that people of Azerbaijani origin from other countries come but it is not the way how it is presented that Azerbaijan invited terrorists in order to fight. This is false information.

-Are you aware of those volunteers with Azerbaijani origin?

-There can be, I said, I do not exclude. There can be. But we receive many requests, many letters from Azerbaijanis who live outside to come and to fight for their historical motherland. But our position is – we don't need it. We have enough people on the battlefield.

-Japanese companies joined oil and pipe line projects of Azerbaijan. They are investors here. Do you have concerns over the security of five pipelines? Is there any risk of postponement of the TAP pipeline which is going to be opened very soon within this year?

-No, with Tap pipeline everything is on the schedule, it is already done. It's a matter of maybe some additional weeks, not months for official opening of TAP. Everything is ready, the historical pipeline from Baku to Europe have been completed. With respect to other pipelines which we have and particular oil and gas pipelines on the territory of Azerbaijan during all these years since 2006, when Baku-Tbilisi-Jeyhan was commissioned, we didn't have any accident. Our pipelines on our territory are duly protected. But of course we heard threats from official Armenian representatives that they will attack our pipelines, they will attack Sangachal terminal which is an important terminal for oil and gas transportation, but this is also part of their terrorist nature. Because they openly declare that they will attack civilian infrastructure. And of course, if they do it, they will regret, because they will be punished by us, severely, and also those countries which today provide part of their energy security from Azerbaijan. What will be reaction of those countries? Billions of dollars have been invested in these pipelines. International banks, all the leading international banks like World Bank, EBRD, Asian Development Bank, European Investment Bank and other banks invested. So, the Armenian leadership should think twice about this kind of option. And of course, as I said, Azerbaijan itself will punish them severely, and I don't think that they will even dare to do this, another war crime.

-Since it's very rare occasion for us to meet you. Let us ask, a couple of questions about the future of your country in general.

-Yes of course.

-So, Azerbaijan is the first commercial oil producer in the world.

-Yes, that is true.

-But how do you think the country would transfer to the post-oil era. Do you have any expectations from you know, how Japanese companies might be involved in that?

-Yes, of course we have agenda of diversification of our economy, and this process is successfully continuing. Even this year, though our GDP is going down not very seriously, it's less than 4% decline so far. In comparison with some other countries it's not a bad result but with respect to non-oil related industry we have a growth. That shows that our diversification program is being implemented very successfully. Industrial development, business opportunities, tourism, of course before the pandemic was rapidly growing. And innovation sector and agriculture, and of course coming back to the main topic, when we see that now Azerbaijan is liberating the territories, first we liberated very important water storage, which will provide water supply for tens of thousands of hectares of land. Armenia actually committed an ecological terror against us. They were closing the water from the river Tartar and thus hundred thousands of hectares of land were not supplied with water. They were closing in summer, when people need it and they were opening it in winter and making floods. So, the terrorist nature of Armenia is on every, every step. So, after we regained the territories back, and this is a very good soil for growing different products, for breeding cattle, of course, our agriculture will have a new boost. We already started to plan our future agricultural development with respect of the liberation of the territories. Of course, we think that investments in human capital will provide for us good opportunities for development, because oil and gas will come to an end once, though, our reserves are huge. We just started to export large quantities of natural gas, and oil production profile will be more or less stable for coming decades. But non-energy sector of course, is priority. With respect to Japanese companies, they are very active here in the area of energy, with the loans from Japanese banks we built two big power stations, in Baku. Their capacity is close to 800 megawatts. So these power stations provide important part of our consumption and our export. We, by the way, export electric energy also, and we want to see Japanese companies in the area of renewable energy, which is now one of the priorities. We already signed preliminary agreements with some investors. So, we hope that the area which is very promising and has a potential because of a lot of sun and a lot of wind, especially in Absheron peninsula. And in many other areas today Japanese companies provide equipment, machinery, technology also in agriculture. So, we are very satisfied with the level of economic cooperation between Japan and Azerbaijan.

-What about political reforms? You have criticism, I mean there are criticism from many western countries that you yourself succeeded your father and now your wife is vice president and so, are you ready to promote democracy and to open up power to oppositions?

I think that the democratic development in the country is going in a positive direction. We have all the major freedoms in Azerbaijan. Freedom of political activity, media freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, religious freedom. So, there is no restrictions on that. We have free internet, by the way, and those who tried to criticize us they should look to the substance and not spread rumors and use the so-called democratic shortcomings of Azerbaijan for political purposes, for the purposes of political pressure. Now, I introduced the new program of political reforms which was supported by absolute majority of all political parties. And that was done by the way before this clash. Now, of course, absolute majority of political parties strongly support my policy on return of the occupied territories. Only two parties are not part of this process. Only two parties are going against national interests of Azerbaijan. This is a Popular Front Party, and Musavat Party. And by the way, these two parties rejected my proposal for political dialogue. I made this proposal several months ago. I said, we need to have a political dialogue, we need to have normal, civilized relations between the government and opposition, between a leading party and other parties. And now I think 50 parties or more supported that. We are in a very active phase of the political dialogue. Only two parties, which have a direct financing from outside, which always were acting against national interests of Azerbaijan, these two parties are responsible for the loss of the territories. Because they were in power in 1992-1993, when Armenia occupied our territories-Popular Front and Musavat. And those people who are responsible for the loss of the territories today are the leaders of these parties for almost 30 years. And nobody talks about democracy, nobody talks about how they keep this position for almost 30 years. Therefore, those who want to criticize us better look at the mirror. In front of our eyes, in front of the international community eyes we see how demonstrations are brutally suppressed in the so-called democracies. How people are being killed at the rallies, wounded, injured. Every week we see it. How police is using you know dogs and horses in order to suppress protestors. You will not see it in Azerbaijan. Never. Therefore, those who criticize us better take care of their own business. With respect to what you said about me succeeding my father, yes it is true. But before I succeeded my father, I was for many years a Member of Parliament, since 1995 until 2003. I was the president of the National Olympic Committee since 1997. I was a deputy and then senior deputy of the leading political party – Yeni Azerbaijan Party. And I was a prime minister. So, my political career is known to international observers and of course, they know that it was not like they want to present. And talking about succeeding, why nobody talks about Bush family. How they succeeded each other. Why nobody talks about Clinton family. When the wife became the Secretary of State and then was a presidential candidate. And many other cases like that. Let them look at themselves before raising this issue. With respect to my wife, my wife was a Member of Parliament since 2005. She was very active on the issues related to the social and humanitarian area. She was and is the head of the biggest NGO in the Caucasus – the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. She has a strong support among Azerbaijanis, you can ask any person on the street and you will see how they love her and support her. And she was and is a deputy chairman of Yeni Azerbaijan Party. Therefore, her political career also was not a kind of sudden event. And I can tell you that she was not very happy when I suggested this position to her. I can tell you, maybe I tell that for the first time, it took me a lot of time to persuade her. And I had arguments and she didn't want. She is totally involved in social, humanitarian issues. And she wants and she helps tens of thousands of people, tens of thousands. But she does it without any PR, without advertisement, without announcement. So, she is a person our people are proud of.

-You mentioned freedom of speech and the internet. But I believe there are some restrictions on the social networking systems.

-These are temporary restrictions, these restrictions have been imposed after these clashes have started. And we made announcement to our people that this is for the issues of national security. Because, we need to protect at this time our information system from Armenian provocations. So, this is temporary. As soon as this active phase of clashes stops, all these restrictions will be lifted. But I can tell you that the level of penetration of internet is very high, and more than 80 percent of Azerbaijanis are internet users. So, it is only temporary.

-Let me close with the one final question your highness. Let's finish it with the hopeful note. Are you hopeful for a peaceful solution? And what will peace can bring Armenia and Azerbaijan also

because Armenia is landlocked. Borders are closed here, borders are closed on Turkish side, their economy is on decline, what can peace bring to both countries?

-Of course, peace will change the situation in region completely. And I hope to see the time when the three countries of the Southern Caucasus will have cooperation. Now for instance, level of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia is very high. We are strategic partners, and with current Georgian government we have excellent relations. We support each other and we are good neighbors and good friends. And we implemented look, how many projects together. Oil transportation, gas transportation, energy transportation, railroad connection, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars, Baku-Tbilisi-Jeyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, TANAP and many others. Azerbaijan is, I think, first to second largest investor in Georgia along with Turkey. First to second largest taxpayer and by the way, in the middle of 90s the issue of construction of pipeline was discussed. There were some proposals from the West to have these pipelines through Armenia. But Armenia should have then liberate the territories and then, the pipeline could have gone from Azerbaijan to Armenia and then to Nakhchivan and to Turkey. And that was a shortest route. If you look at the map you will see how the pipeline goes. It is because to bypass Armenia. But Armenians thought that we will not be able to implement this pipeline. Therefore, they said no, and I think now they seriously regret. They became deadlocked because of occupation. They thought that we will not be able to build pipelines, they thought we will not be able to build railroads, they were always advocating for how to say functioning of the Kars-Gumru railroad which existed. But it was closed because our brotherly country Turkey closed the border because of Armenian occupation. So, now Armenia is not landlocked but they don't have border with Turkey, because of aggression against Azerbaijan, and because of territorial claims against Turkey. Maybe you don't know, but in their constitution they have territorial claims against Turkey. One must be crazy now to have claims to such a powerful country as Turkey. But that's substance of their ideology. During the time of negotiations, there have been messages sent to previous Armenian government that if they put an end to occupation, Azerbaijan can implement different social and economic projects in Nagorno-Karabakh. These messages were sent through the Minsk-group co-chairs to former Armenian president and they rejected. Today in Nagorno-Karabakh people live in poverty, you know total unemployment, poverty and destroyed infrastructure. We were ready to invest, but we said liberate the territories and we will help you. Today when we liberate the territories, ourselves, definitely will help those people those Armenians who live in Nagorno-Karabakh and of course Azerbaijanis who will return to rebuild this area. But if Armenia makes the constructive steps and liberate the territories of course, we will open all the communications. I know that, I heard about the position of the Turkish government that they will also open communications if Armenia liberates the territories. Then the situation in the southern Caucasus will completely change.

-Has Mr. Erdogan mentioned you about this intention?

-Well, maybe we did not discussed it directly. But of course, we know that this is the position that the reason why Armenian Turkish border is closed, because of the occupation. If occupation is lifted, the border will be opened it is official position of Turkish government and Armenians know that. And without normalization of relations with Turkey and with Azerbaijan Armenia has no future. Because the market is small, and is getting smaller. Population is shrinking, migration is very high. According to our information today, real population, how many people there are in Armenia, less than two million. Less than two million. It will go down. Because of no job, especially now when they are deprived of those very productive lands in the occupied territories. If you look at these images from the sky, you will see how they use our land for illegal products. They not only use our land, they use our gold mines in Kalbajar. There are foreign companies whom we will sue, if they don't stop. By the way, soon I think they will stop anyway. So, they will suffer even more problems, because they will be deprived of this important agricultural segment. They will just decline and we will develop. Our population is growing. Turkish population is 83 million, Azerbaijani population is 10 million. Armenian population is less than two million. They should think how they are going to live here in 10 years, in 20 years, in 50 years if they don't be reasonable, if they don't put end to aggression. And they cannot afford this aggression any longer, and we showed them on the battlefield who is who. All their mythology about their brave army, was a kind of fake. Their army is running, we defeat them. We beat them, and we will continue to do it, until they get out of our land.

-Thank you very much for this opportunity and it has been always a pleasure to be in Baku.

-Thank you.

President Ilham Aliyev gave interview to French Le Figaro newspaper

24.10.2020 [10:00]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has given an interview to the French Le Figaro newspaper.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

-My first question would be Mr. President, why did you launch an offensive on September 27 against Nagorno-Karabakh? What are the political objectives of this military attack?

-We did not launch military attack on Nagorno-Karabakh on September 27th. It was Armenia who launched a military attack on Azerbaijan, and in the first hours of this military attack we had victims, among civilians and among our military servicemen. This was the 3rd military provocation by Armenia against Azerbaijan, within 3 months. First, they attacked us on the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, far away from the Karabakh region. And by unanimous opinion of international observers it was Armenia who launched an attack on us. They wanted to occupy new territories. They wanted to take control over the strategic energy infrastructure which situated several kilometres from our state border with Armenia. As you probably know, Trans Adriatic Pipeline is almost completed. And the Southern Gas Corridor project is not only a project of energy security of Azerbaijan but also of Europe. We think that one of the goals of Armenia was to take control of that pipelines and to blackmail us, and maybe European consumers. They got a serious response. We pushed them back. But unfortunately, next month, in August, they send the sabotage group, which planned to commit acts of terror against Azerbaijanis. The head of the sabotage group was detected by our military people, military servicemen, and he gives evidence. So, it is a deliberate attempt to disrupt negotiations and to attack Azerbaijan. As far as political goals of Armenia, which they pursued launching the attack, was to keep the status quo unchanged, to put the blame for this escalation on us, to disrupt negotiations completely, and to involve third countries and to internationalize the conflict. We only gave them adequate response, as a result of that we liberated and continue to liberate part of the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan.

-Azerbaijan has the mission to be a hub not only on energy pipelines but also on internet, fiberglass cables. And there is Azerbaijani company called Neqsol who want to be the connection between Europe and Central Asia, for internet. Do you think that this project is still possible or not to have directly through Azerbaijan in Internet from Europe, to Central Asia?

-We as you correctly mentioned became already the regional hub for not only for energy, but also for transportation. We are now providing important transportation network for our partners across the Caspian in the eastern part of the Caspian Sea and Europe. Our investments in infrastructure resulted in creation of a very broad international cooperation format on transportation. Of course, everything started with the energy infrastructure, oil and gas pipelines going through Azerbaijan already became very important source of energy security. And with respect to the oil pipelines we already transit oil from Central Asia, through Azerbaijan to Europe. With respect to the internet connection, we invest largely into IT sector, internet penetration in Azerbaijan is about 80 percent. 80 percent of our population are internet users. And we have very developed private companies in this area. Therefore, the company which you mentioned as far as I know is a private company, which has its own agenda, and which invested in the region. And I think their target is to implement commercially viable project. And definitely, Azerbaijan from geographical point of view and point of view of infrastructure today is very important regional actor.

-My question now is can you describe us what is after more than one month of war? where is the front? How are the current military operations?

-It is less than one month, and during this one month as a result of a very successful counter-attack, Azerbaijan managed to liberate part of the occupied territories, cities and villages and every day we report about new cities and villages which have been liberated. It was not easy, because during the 30 years of occupation Armenia built on the occupied territories very solid engineering constructions. So, it was not easy to cross the line of contact. But we did it in different directions, in the north, in the south. And this demonstrates the high level of capacity, capability of Azerbaijani Army, and we defeat Armenia on the battlefield. And they have to run away from us. So, we already restored the international border with Iran. More than 130 km of this border was under occupation. So, we did a lot on the battlefield and this continues. Armenia two times violated the ceasefire. If they didn't violate the ceasefire, first on the 10th of October

brutally violated it launching a ballistic missile on the sleeping city of Ganja and second time on the 17th of October, today the clashes would have stopped and political solution would have prevailed. That's our position. If they don't stop, we will continue to liberate our lands.

-They bombed Ganja because there was a couple of Turkish F-16 fighters and one of these Turkish f-16 fighters shut down Armenian plane. That's why they said they bombed Ganja.

-This is fake news. I think that everybody now understands that was fake news by Armenia. Turkish F-16 are here because they were participating in the joint military training just before the clashes started. And they are on the ground. They are not in the air. Armenian SU-25 hit the mountain. They tried to pretend as if it was hit by the Turkish F-16. But that was in the first days of the conflict. It was in September. But they launched an attack on Ganja with ballistic missile on the 10th of October, first. Second, ballistic missile's launch was made from the territory of Armenia. And you know, big countries can monitor it clearly. They know from where it is launched and what is a task for the missile? The task was to hit civilians. They hit the area of Ganja where people live. So, that was an act of international terror, that was another reflection of the war crime policy of Armenia. These attacks on Ganja, cannot be justified. And they will be responsible for that.

-By accepting the intervention of Turkey and the arrival of Syrian fighters from Turkey, aren't you afraid of turning local conflict into a regional war?

-First of all, Turkey is not involved in the conflict at all. There is not a single evidence of Turkish involvement. From the first hours of Armenian attack on Azerbaijan Turkey, Turkish president and other high-ranking officials expressed and continue to express strong political support to Azerbaijan, support to the norms and principles of international law, support to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions which demand immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from our territories. So, this is first. Second, there are no foreign fighters on Azerbaijani soil. This is another fake news. It was spread by some officials, in some countries. But so far, more than 20 days after the clashes started we didn't get any single evidence neither from France nor from Russia. Because the French and then Russian officials made this statement and we asked for evidence. We asked for proofs. Only words, no evidence, no proofs. And another thing is that we don't need any foreigners to fight with us. Because we have a regular army of 100 thousand people. We have modern equipment. We have motivated people who were suffering from occupation for 30 years. We did not even announce full mobilization. If we need additional people on the ground we will recruit more. Therefore, this is another attempt to present Azerbaijan as an aggressor, and also attempt by Armenia to diminish the capacity of Azerbaijani army which is beating them on the ground.

-Mr President, you said you have very modern equipment, it is true. You have all kinds of drones some coming from Turkey but also efficient kamikaze drones coming from Israel Harop. So, is the help of Israeli military equipment very important for you, and allow you to make military breakthrough?

-We buy military equipment from many countries. And our biggest supplier of military equipment is not Turkey and Israel, it is Russia. But unlike Armenia, from Russia we buy weapons, we pay for them. Armenia gets weapons from Russia free of charge. We also buy weapons from Iran, from Ukraine, from Belarus, and of course, we can afford to buy modern weapons which today help our army to restore our territorial integrity. Our territorial integrity is being restored by us. But any country in our region is buying weapons. Not many countries in the world can supply themselves 100% with military equipment. So, there is nothing strange about that. And of course, we pay for the weapons. We buy good ones and of course they help us on the ground. But liberation of territories is not by drones. Liberation of territories is by soldiers. By people who are on the ground are doing their job.

-Iran has complained that fighting during a military operation took on the border. Did you settle this dispute with Iran? Did you talk to the Iranian leaders?

-Yes, we did. And as far as I know, Iranian leaders also talk to Armenian side. Because the clashes were taking place just by the river Araz, close to the border with Iran, and by accident, some of the weapons crossed the border. But today we announced that we cleaned completely the Azerbaijani-Iranian border from Armenian occupants. Therefore, no more clashes take place there, and there will be no more inconvenience for our brothers across the river of Araz in Iran.

-What is the best possible mediator to bring out to this war? Is it Russia? Is it the best possible mediator?

-We have three mediators. They have a mandate from OSCE-Russia, France and United States. For 28 years they are trying to mediate. And trying to help parties to find the solution without any success. These three countries are at the same time members of the UN Security Council, permanent members. These three countries adopted those resolutions which I referred to, which demand withdrawal of Armenian troops. But unfortunately, they did not put enough international pressure on Armenia to liberate the occupied territories and to comply with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. Therefore, after the Armenian military attack, we had to defend ourselves, and had to restore justice by force, what we are successfully doing. And among these three mediators, each of them is important and I observe, and I see and I know that on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh they have very rare unanimous approach. It is probably the only issue where their interests coincide.

-What kind of land you want to take back and then be ready to stop this war Mr. President?

-We are ready to stop today. I was telling that since the 10th of October, when in Moscow both sides agreed on ceasefire. And I said: "the sooner the military part of the solution of the problem is over the better." We want to move on negotiation table. But unfortunately, Armenia brutally violated ceasefire and launched an attack on Ganja. And on the 17th of October they violated ceasefire two minutes after ceasefire was efficient. Therefore, if they stop today we will stop and then, the rest will be done by diplomats. If they do not stop, we will go until the end to liberate all the occupied territories.

-So this is your plan. This is Azerbaijan's plan to get out of the conflict.

-Yes. If they stop now and behave in a constructive way, if they publicly commit to the basic principles elaborated by France, Russia and the United States which Azerbaijan is committed to, then, of course everything will stop and we will go back on negotiation table. By the way, I am in this process for 17 years. I worked with two former Armenian presidents and we made not a big progress, but we made progress. We were meeting regularly. There have been regular meetings in Moscow, in Paris, in Washington. But after Mr. Pashinyan came to power, he actually did everything in order to destroy negotiation process not only by his statements, but by his military provocations. And since he came to power for already two years or more, there is no process. Therefore, I think the political settlement is possible. But Armenian government should understand that they are not now in a position to dictate, because status quo no more exists, line of contact no more exists. We created a new reality on the ground. And they have to take that into account.

-What is your vision about the future of Karabakh?

-I expressed it many times publicly. And I can tell you now. Also, I delivered certain messages through mediators, through Minsk Group co-chairs to previous Armenian government how we see the future. We see Karabakh as a prosperous, safe, secure area of Azerbaijan where people live in peace and dignity, where Azerbaijani and Armenian communities live side by side. The area which we plan to develop as we did in all other parts of Azerbaijan. I can tell you that we have very substantial economic achievements. We have very low level of poverty, it is about five percent. In Armenia it is close to 50 percent. Also very low level of unemployment. Before the pandemic it was around 5 percent, now it is seven. But in comparison with Nagorno-Karabakh which is endemic, it is day and night. So, we can provide much better life, for Armenians who live there, for Azerbaijanis who will return there. And I am sure that the two nations, two peoples will reconcile, because in the 21st century it is not possible to isolate yourself to commit ethnic cleansing and try to transform de facto situation into secession. It is not possible. No one recognized Nagorno-Karabakh so far, including Armenia itself. I am sure no one will recognize it. Therefore, the best way for the future of Karabakh, not only Nagorno-Karabakh, but all the Karabakh is a big region of Azerbaijan, is to live in peace in harmony, and to try to become good neighbors against Armenians and Azerbaijanis. This is my plan.

- I remember that in the beginning of 1990s there was an anti-Armenian pogrom in Baku. That's why Armenians do not trust they can live, they are afraid for their lives to live in Azerbaijani territory.

-Conflict started after separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh, sponsored by nationalists in Armenia launched a secession plan to secede from Azerbaijan. And they could not do it from legal point of view at the time of the Soviet Union. So, they started pogroms in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and in the territory of Armenia. The first victims of the war and clashes were Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh. There have been 40 thousand Azerbaijanis who lived in Nagorno-Karabakh, primarily in Shusha and also in the capital Khankandi who were ethnically cleansed completely. Then, 250 thousand Azerbaijanis who

lived in Armenia, many of them were killed and all of them were ethnically cleansed, expelled. What happened in Baku, in those time which you mentioned is a dark page of our history. But, those clashes were taking place everywhere-in Erevan, in other Armenian cities, in Nagorno-Karabakh. Therefore, this should not be a kind of a reason why people cannot reconcile. In Europe how many times France and Germany had wars? How many times you know other countries had wars? We had World War II which costed lives of 30 or 40 million people. But after twenty years, western Germany and Soviet Union became on good terms. And now nobody remembers that. This is how it should happen in the civilized world. The problem is in Armenia, they cultivate hatred. They cultivate historical hatred against Turkey, against Azerbaijan. Former president of Armenia Kocharyan publicly said that Azerbaijanis and Armenians cannot live together. But look. How they live together for instance, in Georgia? In some Georgian villages Azerbaijanis and Armenians live side by side. In Russia it is the same. In Azerbaijan we have thousands of Armenians who live in our country. Why it is not possible in Nagorno-Karabakh. I think that the wounds of the war must be healed by political wisdom, by political will. And after this active, hot phase of the conflict stops, both sides need to invest largely in order to do everything to heal these wounds.

-This is my last question. Aren't you afraid Mr. President that after a while President Erdogan of Turkey will stop his support and his policy in Caucasus to focus on Northern Cyprus?

Turkey and Azerbaijan are brotherly countries. And our brotherhood have been tested in many circumstances. And in this particular case, Turkish President expressed publicly strong support to Azerbaijan. He said that Azerbaijan is not alone. Turkey is side by side. So, this is a very strong political support and we are very grateful for that. This is first thing. Second, what I want to say that what we are doing on the battlefield we do ourselves. Yes, with modern weapons, with modern equipment but it is Azerbaijani soldiers and officers who liberate our motherland. Our relations with Turkey have a great history but even brighter future. Turkey as a country which is the only country in the world having a border with all the three republics or countries of Southern Caucasus- Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, has, I think, a legitimate right to be involved in this process. Because as a neighbor, as a country which can provide and provides stability, predictability for the region and as a country whose agenda is very clear they defend international law. International law says that our territories are under occupation. So, what wrong do they do? They just demand international law to be implied. Armenia doesn't want to do it. They want to keep our lands for more than thirty years under occupation by illegal settlement of Armenians from Lebanon, by military operations against Azerbaijanis, by destroying our historical and religious heritage. Turkey's role is very positive. And after the war with Armenia stops, and political settlement is enforced, I am sure the role of Turkey will be very important and very positive.

-So, you don't think that Turkey has a plan to erase Armenia in order to have a direct connection to the Turkish people of Central Asia.

No, this is again, Armenian phobias, and Armenian provocations. In the peaceful plan which I was discussing with leaders of Armenia before Pashinyan came to power, there was a clear reference to communications. After the peace agreement is signed, all communications are opening, including communication between Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and the mainland of Azerbaijan. And thus, Turkey and Azerbaijan and Central Asia will have a land connection. Today we don't have it. But Turkey still has connections through Azerbaijan. We built couple of years ago Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad. So, Turkish goods through Georgia, Azerbaijan, Caspian go to central Asia and backwards. But the road from Turkey, Nakhchivan, Armenia and Azerbaijan is shorter. So, it is not the fact that Turkey does not have this connection. And as you say, somebody thinks that they will erase Armenia to have it. They have it. We have it. We will have another one. But it is again part of the peace plan. All communications will be open. And I think that Armenian government should not try to frighten its population with Turkey. And should stop this hatred towards the Turkish and Azerbaijani people.

-How is your relationship currently with Georgia, who is another Christian nation in the Caucasus region?

Yes, with Georgia our relations are excellent. We call each other strategic partners. Azerbaijan is the first or second largest investor in Georgia, and the first or second largest taxpayer. I am saying first or second because one year it is Turkey, another year it is Azerbaijan. And we have a trilateral format of cooperation between Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan. We had presidential summits, ministerial meetings, including defense ministers, foreign ministers, economy ministers. We have all our major transportation and energy communication going through Georgia. We have a big Azerbaijani community in Georgia close

to 300 thousand people. Therefore, relations are excellent. And I think it could be a good example, like our relations with Turkey, our relations with Georgia are good examples of good neighborhood. By the way, the fact that Georgia is Christian and Azerbaijan is Muslim does not make any difference. We do not look at this region from this point of view.

-You don't take religion into account when you do projects.

-No, religion is separated from the state. According to our constitution, Azerbaijan is a secular country. We respect our religion, we respect religions of all other nationalities who live in Azerbaijan. And I think the best indicator of religious harmony in Azerbaijan would be the words of His Holiness, head of the Roman Catholic Church Pope Francis. When he was in Baku several years ago, he made a public statement highly praising Azerbaijan's role in intercultural and interreligious dialogue. All the representatives of different religions in Azerbaijan live in peace and harmony, including Armenians. In the center of Baku, there is an Armenian church which has been restored by us and protected by our government. But our mosques on the occupied territories have been destroyed. And Armenians keep pigs in our mosques. Just recent videos were on internet. In Zangilan region, after liberation of one village, it was on internet how pigs walk in our mosque. So, Azerbaijan is a tolerant and a secular country and will continue to be like that in the future.

-Thank you. It was a very good interview Mr. President.

-Thank you.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by U.S. Fox News TV channel

25.10.2020 [11:10]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by the U.S. Fox News TV channel.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

-Good morning.

-Good morning to you

-I worked in Europe for 30 years. I have never been to your region. I apologize. We will have to correct that in the coming months.

-I hope you will have time to visit us also. Some time in the future.

-I also. It's beautiful. Well, I like Formula 1, and I like Zaha Hadid architecture, I like the movies. You have done a wonderful job modernizing your country.

-Thank you.

-I have heard many of your interviews. You eloquently explain in great detail the complex issues facing the region. I must be blunt and to the point, concise and short. So we can get more answers on. I fully understand these are very complex issues that go back hundreds of years.

-Yes, I will try to explain to the American audience what is happening, and why it happened, and what we want to see in the future.

-That's great. Well, we are very interested. By many accounts, on September 27th your forces began this latest round of war. There was a relative peace in Nagorno-Karabakh region. There was some kind of a diplomatic framework that people had an idea to resolve this crisis, but the fighting started. Why did you decided to move on now?

-It was not Azerbaijan who started the firing on 27th of September. So far, no official representative from any country actually raise this issue in front of us. It was Armenia who launched an attack on the 27th of September. And the purpose was to disrupt completely the negotiation process. They did more or less the same on July, when they attacked our forces on the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. They were suffering the bitter defeat. Then they sent a sabotage group on August, to penetrate through our military positions, and to attack our civilians and military personnel. So, on 27th of September they started artillery bombardment from the heavy artillery weapons. And in the first hours of the attack we had victims among civilians and military servicemen. So far, we have 63 victims among civilians and almost 300 hundred of them wounded. So, it was Armenia. We just had to defend ourselves and to respond. And our response was very adequate and as a result of that we managed to liberate important part of the occupied territories.

-But regardless of who shot the first shot, there was fighting basically right away on both sides. In that period and in the follow up you said in fact that you would want to remove all Armenian forces from this area and that would only be the answer that could resolve this crisis. And in the months leading up to this September 27th day there was much talk of war and action in Azerbaijan. You have to admit you were looking for war.

-What I was saying was in line with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. Back in 1993 Security Council resolutions adopted by United Nations clearly demanded from Armenia complete, unconditional and immediate withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, during 27 years, these resolutions were not implemented. So, when I was saying that we want Armenian troops out of internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan, I am right from legal point of view and what I say is in line with Security Council resolutions Of United Nations. **We were talking...**

-Mr president, there is legal, and there is reality on the ground. Reality on the ground in Nagorno-Karabakh and the region is that now after all the trouble that you went through back in 80s and the 90s are principally Armenian population. If you went in there you have to again remove Armenians and bring Azerbaijanis back, yet another displacement. There is a diplomatic plan on the table, to keep Nagorno-Karabakh independent, for Armenia to give back seven of the areas around it. Does diplomacy did and does diplomacy make no sense to you?

-What you said about diplomatic solution is not correct. Because there is no plan presented to us from the mediators, United States, Russia and France, to give Nagorno-Karabakh independence. Not at all. In the peaceful plan, there is a proposal...

-Autonomy.

-No, no. Not at all. In the peaceful plan, there is a proposal, there is a point that all the occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, the territories which have been inhabited by Azerbaijanis and more than 700 thousand Azerbaijanis were ethnically cleansed from those territories-these territories must be returned to Azerbaijan. And the reality is on the ground you are talking about is the realities as a result of aggressive separatism from Armenia and ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis. All Azerbaijanis have been expelled from Nagorno-Karabakh, there have been 40 thousand of them before the war. All Azerbaijanis have been expelled from 7 regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh with 700 thousand. My point is...

-Mr president, in 1994 you lost the war. Now in 2020 you want to restart the war to win the war.

-We did not lose the war, we lost the battle. That was due to objective reasons. First, there was an internal instability in Azerbaijan. Armenia took advantage of that.

-My point is that why in 2020 you want to restart the war? I mean, it has been calm for 20 years.

-And second, that was due to open external support to Armenia. We did not start the war, we just responded and we do it based on the United Nations Charter. United Nations charter provides the right of every country for self-defense. What we are doing? We are defending ourselves, and we are liberating internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan from Armenian occupation. Nothing more than that. And with respect to Armenian people I have said many times that Armenian people who live in Nagorno-Karabakh are our citizens. We will take care of them. They will live in dignity, in peace, side by side with Azerbaijanis who will return there.

-Mr president, why are you resisting calls from the UN as you mentioned Russia, Iran the United States, the EU, NATO, why are you resisting calls for a ceasefire? And in fact, breaking to the terms to create a ceasefire. And I know today, that's what Secretary of State Pompeo will be asking for a ceasefire to exchange bodies, to exchange the wounded. Isn't this a good time for a ceasefire?

-We were ready for a ceasefire and on the 10th of October, in Moscow, our foreign minister, Armenian foreign minister and Russian foreign minister issued a joint declaration about the ceasefire. But the next day, the next day, Armenians from the territory of Armenia launched an attack on the second largest city of Azerbaijan-Ganja, situated far away from the area of clashes with ballistic missiles killing 10 civilians and wounding more than 30. Then, there was a second ballistic attack on Ganja, killing 15 people. So it was Armenia...

-But you violated ceasefire as well.

-No, we just responded, because we agreed about ceasefire two times, the first time Armenians at night, at 1 am at night, launched a ballistic missile on a sleeping city. Second time, ceasefire lasted only for two minutes and Armenia violated it. There are no evidence that Azerbaijan violated the ceasefire.

-But let me put it this way, if Secretary of State Pompeo today puts it to your foreign minister, the US really wants a ceasefire another try. Will you give it another try?

-Yes, we are ready. I said many times publicly. We are ready to agree on ceasefire today, but at the same time Armenia, its prime minister should say that they are committed to the basic principles elaborated by the United States, Russia and France. Armenian prime minister two days ago said that there is no diplomatic solution to the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh.

-So, this has got strings attached. Is there a ceasefire with no strings attached.

-We want a ceasefire, we want our territories back. Armenia should commit that they will liberate the territories. According to the United Nations Security Council resolutions and according to the peace plan presented by US, France and Russia. But he does not say this.

-Mr president, how do you respond to charges that your military is inordinately targeting civilian areas, homes, residences, stores even a very important church has been hit by your high tech weaponry. Thousands others have been killed or injured just in the past four weeks.

-We do not attack civilians. After Armenian brutal attack, an act of terror against the city of Ganja with ballistic missiles where dozens of people have been killed, we publicly said that we will take revenge

but on the battlefield. We do not attack civilians, we do not attack religious sights. What happened to the church in Shusha was either a mistake, and I already publicly commented on that, or it was done by Armenians themselves in order to put a blame on us.

-Again, Mr. president, we are seeing video scenes of the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, all the population there has to live in basements. They are hearing artillery every twenty minutes. Their city where civilians are living is wrecked. You can't call the entire city a military target.

-There have been military targets in the capital of the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic" Khankandi and our attacks there were only before 9th of October. We didn't attack any civilians or cities, in the Nagorno-Karabakh after that, but they attacked. Have you seen the images of what they have done to Ganja? What they done

-Were you targeting civilians from September 27 to October 19?

-No, no, no. we were targeting military infrastructure in the so-called "capital of Nagorno Karabakh" Khankandi, because

military basis, military infrastructure is situated in the city.

-You have drones from Turkey, you have military gear from Israel, you have high-tech equipment from Russia. How can you use that and not also hit civilians?

-No, no. Our drones and these images, a lot of them are on the internet. You can look, how our drones destroy Armenian tanks and other weapons. So far, our drones destroyed more than 230 tanks. We destroyed 6 S-300 anti-air missile system. We destroyed hundreds of their armed vehicles. We do not use drones for civilians this is false information.

-Let's talk about the soldiers, the troops that are in action. From multiple sources, from France, from Russia from independent respected journalists at the New-York Times for example, they absolutely assert that Syrians, militias gathered and transported by Turkey in a hundreds are now fighting your war. Why do you have Turkish backed Syrian militias fighting your war in Azerbaijan?

-This is another fake news. I regret that Russia and France, the only countries by the way, which publicly commented on that made such an irresponsible statement. And I demanded and still demand proofs, evidences. It is more than 20 days after the war has started again. So far, not a single evidence or proof was presented to us neither by Russia nor from France.

-The evidence was in the New-York Times. I direct you to the story five days ago that says that 57 Syrian fighters killed in Azerbaijan, were brought back across the border from Turkey and buried in Syria. Their families all attest that they went to Azerbaijan, to fight alongside your army.

-Do you know do you remember how President Trump calls New-York times? Fake news. This is fake news. No evidence, no proof. Give us evidence not only New-York Times.

-I'm just curious, you have a 100 thousand soldiers. Why do you need some scrappy mercenaries?

-Yes. Exactly. We don't need them.

-That's a good question. Why?

-We don't need them. That was what I was talking about. A 100 thousand soldiers in the regular army, plus maybe couple or three times more soldiers we can recruit within couple of days plus more than equipment. We don't need any mercenaries at all. This is fake news, just in order to damage the image of our country, and in order to diminish the bravery of our soldiers on the battlefield.

-Mr president, let's get back to the timing of this. Why we are seeing military action now? Why we are seeing clashes? Critics of your government, of your presidency say that you are using this war as a smokescreen to deflect the tension from problems in your own country, social issues, economic stagnation, corruption, COVID-19. Are you using this just to overattention in a public maybe dissatisfied on a lot of different accounts towards the patriotic battle.

-No, no. This is absolutely wrong. First, our economic performance is one of the best in the world. Economic decline in Azerbaijan in the ten months is less than 4 percent. You can compare it with your own country, or with European countries. Level of unemployment in Azerbaijan is 7 percent, compare it with your own country. Level of poverty in Azerbaijan is five percent, compare it again. We don't have serious social problems. On COVID-19, Azerbaijan is considered as an example by World Health Organization. We provided support to more than 30 countries, financial support, humanitarian support. Our economy is stable. Our economy is sustainable. And there was no need as you say to launch the war in order to cover some of internal problems. It was on the other side, Armenia which is completely now in economic and

social problems. They need to distract attention. It is Armenian prime minister who puts leading opposition party leader to jail. He is pursuing two former presidents.

-We know that there are some accusations of human rights abuses with your own government and suppression of freedom of speech and specifically talking about the corruption and the family rule of both your government and many of the corporate structures. So this is not to pull the attention of your public or some members of your public away from those considered misdeeds by some people.

-No, no, no. Corruption is here and we are fighting against it. We have introduced a broad economic reforms program. Many people, many governmental officials and high ranking officials have been arrested recently for charges of corruption. Corruption is everywhere and we are fighting against it. With respect to the family rule, again, I would like to refer you to your own country, where important positions were held by father and son. Just Bush family, Clinton family, husband and wife, Kennedy family, and in many other countries. So, it's nothing different from what is happening in the United States.

-They were all elected democratically and transparently.

-Yes, especially President Bush who was elected by the decision of the US Supreme Court.

-You know the American politics Mr President.

-I know yes. I am well prepared for that.

-Let's go to the United States now. What would you like to see today and in the future Secretary of State Pompeo do? There has been some criticism of Secretary Pompeo and the US that they haven't been enough engaged. I know, Russia is quite involved, Turkey in various ways involved, even Iran is offering help. What would you like? Has the US done enough would you like to see the US do more? What would you like Washington to do?

-I think that the US as one of the three co-chairs of the Minsk group has a mandate from OSCE to help parties to come to an agreement. And agreement must be based on international law it should not be based on what I want or what Armenian prime minister wants. It should be based on international law. Nagorno-Karabakh is recognized by the United States and all other countries as integral part of Azerbaijan. So what I can expect from Secretary Pompeo first? To tell prime minister Pashinyan's envoy that statements like "there is no diplomatic solution" is wrong and dangerous. Second, statements by Armenian prime minister that "Karabakh is Armenia" is dangerous and wrong and they should be reasonable. They should give us a timetable for withdrawal from the occupied territories. They should agree for peaceful coexistence between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. And they should stop trying to internationalize the conflict. They should stop asking Russia for direct military involvement. This is counter-productive. All the efforts of Armenian prime minister during these times is to ask Russia to send troops to fight against Azerbaijan. And this is very dangerous.

-What's your deadpoint, I mean another criticism of Secretary of State Pompeo, and he directly says, and certainly, the US and Turkey has as many areas of commonality but he says Turkey's assistance of your effort is actually causing problems, it's fueling the flames. How do you react to that?

-Turkey provides political support to Azerbaijan. It is our closest ally and friend. And we are proud and happy that we have such a great country as our partner. Every country has a right to have friends and allies. Armenia has its allies.

-Turkey has been pushing for war. Turkey says there is a military way to go.

-No, not at all. Not at all. Not a single evidence about that. Turkey only provides political support and this is enough, because when Turkey says that they stand side by side with Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan is not alone, this is a message to all those who want to penetrate and provide their interests with respect to the conflict.

-You did offered an important line when we were speaking just a short while ago. You said in our discussions in your discussions with the Secretary of State Pompeo that there is a diplomatic solution. Do you believe there is a diplomatic solution to this crisis?

-Yes, I believe, otherwise I wouldn't have been in the negotiations for 17 years. You were trying to say that I launched the war. But if I launched the war why should I wait for 17 years? Azerbaijani army is well-prepared already for at least ten years already. Therefore, the diplomatic solution is on the table. Armenia must liberate territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijanis must return to those territories and then live in peace and dignity with Armenians. That's our position.

-So, you are saying diplomatic solution but with a military overlay.

-I said that I wish the military solutions stop today and we move on negotiation table. This military factor is causing a lot of damage and a lot of victims, unfortunately. Therefore, the sooner we start substantive negotiations, not imitation like Armenia wanted to do all these years but substantive negotiations, the sooner the resolution will be found. And if resolution is based on territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

-The worry of some outside of your country, outside of your region and perhaps what should be the worries of yours as well is that this contained conflict becomes a wider regional problem. You have Turkey, with a real interest, you have Russia with a real interest, you have Iran with a real interest. Are you risking your own standing as a country of stature, both economic and politically get lost in some kind of a regional maelstrom that you could have a part in starting?

-All our efforts during the conflict aimed to stop active phase as soon as possible. And we are completely against any form of internationalization of the conflict so that conflict spread over. That's what Armenia wants to do. And as I said, they asked Russia to send military personnel to the area of conflict which is absolutely counterproductive, and which is completely in violation of international law. We don't want other countries to interfere.

-Well, there are Russian bases in Armenia already.

-Exactly, in Armenia, yes.

-They are not illegal.

-Yes, it is in Armenia but not in Nagorno-Karabakh. What they are asking Russians is to send troops to Nagorno-Karabakh and we know about that. Therefore, our position is all the regional countries, and all the countries should stay away from direct involvement in the conflict. Those who want to help and those who have a mandate, OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs must persuade Armenia. I hope it will happen today in Washington, to stop aggression, to commit to ceasefire, and to make commitment that they will leave the territories. They don't do it.

-There was an expression during the Gulf War that it was all about the oil, okay? You got oil pipelines, energy pipelines, within, I don't know, 50-60 miles of the fighting. Are you concerned that your very important energy pipelines and connections could be disrupted by fighting one side or another? And in fact maybe that is helping to drive your military to conduct this war.

-Actually, we are concerned because we heard the statements from high-ranking Armenian officials that they will attack our strategic oil infrastructure, including pipelines and one of the biggest oil and gas terminal in Sangachal district of Baku. And the July clashes where Armenia attacked us, took place 15 kilometers from the gas pipeline which is supposed to provide energy security to Europe. So, it was Armenian plans to disrupt oil and gas supplies from Azerbaijan to Europe and to the world.

-So, were part of motivational what you're doing right now is to defend your economic interest against any threat like that?

-No, we are defending ourselves. You know, our oil pipeline from Baku to Mediterranean was commissioned in 2006 and it works without any disruption. Our gas pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey was commissioned in 2007. A big pipeline to connect Azerbaijan with European consumers is going to be opened in a couple of months probably, maybe even less. Therefore, why should we launch a war in order to protect the pipeline when the pipeline is already protected. It is Armenia which wants to disrupt the pipeline and to make economic damage to Azerbaijan.

-Are you satisfied with what President Trump and his administration has been saying about the conflict? He has been critical of Turkey. But frankly, he has been critical of both sides. He is outweighing very large Armenian diaspora in the United States. So there are political elements in this too. Do you think the United States is handling its role well?

-I think what President Trump does with respect to the conflict resolution is fully in line with international relations. We fully support his position, his personal comments on that. And we see that the position of the United States is balanced and as it should be, because United States is a mediator. President Trump's comments on criticism on Turkey, I did not see it, by the way, in the press. But his comments were constructive. The United States does not take sides as other co-chairs should also don't take sides. We understand internal politics not only in America, but also, in France and Russia. With a very large Armenian community which influences which has a lot of lobbying activity and which is now in full operation against Azerbaijan. And we understand the level of pressure which they can impose. But at the same time, very

straight forward position of President Trump is highly supported here in Azerbaijan not only by me, but also our people.

-Mr president, you know politics. And I bet you know American politics too. We are ten days away from a major presidential election, in figuring out this move towards diplomacy in Washington. Do you think the idea of maybe a diplomatic success might be figuring in the minds of my Washington politicians and having said that do you find that's okay any motivation to get things going?

-Any motivation in order to put an end to the hostility is supported by us. And I think that today's meeting in Washington can have a very good result only if Armenia will commit to peaceful settlement, will stop attacking us and will make commitment that they will withdraw the troops.

-Do you think it is driven by US presidential politics this diplomatic effort today?

-Well, I don't know, I think that the American voters will make the vote based on their approach and their assumption of what is the best for America. I don't think that Karabakh conflict is something which American people are concerned about. Maybe most of them even do not know. But of course, America as a superpower has a very important say in this conflict resolution. And our position is that America as a mediator should continue to be neutral, and should try again and more and more to bring both sides closer to the common decision.

-But let me pick up on that point as we conclude this in the next two minutes. Why should the United States care? I think you probably are right. Most Americans could not find Nagorno-Karabakh on a map. But there were strategic issues you are dealing with, political, cultural, demographic. If you were talking to the United States people now, and said excuse me, I know you have got the presidential. I know you have got the world series baseball, but you should pay attention to this too. What would you tell a typical American. Why it is important for us to care and look at this?

-I would say that Azerbaijan has always been a very true partner to the United States. We are together on the fight against international terrorism, we are together in Afghanistan and we keep our military servicemen in Afghanistan, thus, providing the cause of our peacekeeping operations. We have an important topic on our agenda of energy security. The United States has always strongly supported Azerbaijan's efforts to diversify its energy supply routes. And with a strong support of the United States we managed to complete important projects. Azerbaijan and the United States have a very strong partnership relations. And the United States considers Azerbaijan as a friend. And we are really friends. Therefore, it is in the interests of the United States that there is peace here. Azerbaijan continues its path on the route of independence, strengthening the independence. We are situated just between Europe and Asia, on the crossroads of transportation, energy. Our political importance is growing. Therefore, Azerbaijan is an important partner to the United States and the United States to Azerbaijan.

-So, stability in your country, in your region, politically, economically et cetera could be good for us as well 3000-5000 miles away.

-Yes. America is a superpower. The distance does not make any difference. And I think that the modern, secular, friendly Muslim country is also a big asset for our friends. And the United States from the very first years of independence, always supported Azerbaijan. Today I can tell you we have maybe the highest ever level of our bilateral cooperation and we hope that today's meeting in Washington will be important to persuade Armenia to stop aggression, stop occupation and then peace will come to our land.

-There is a lot of support for Armenia as you know that earlier in the interview in the United States.

-Yes.

-The support for the Christian religion there, for the church is there. For the diaspora the punishment that they incurred many years ago by Turkey. So, you know that there is a warm emotional feeling towards Armenians as well in the United States

-Yes, I know that, I said before that we understand the internal politics, and the Armenian lobby organization. But when we look at the issues related to international relations, there must be principles. Emotions, feelings, some other expression of good will is different. It can be in the family, it can be at the dinner. But in international relations, there is an internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan, which is occupied by Armenia. So, the occupation must come to an end. And those Armenians who live in America, who live in France, who live in Russia, the rich people don't care about those Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. How they live in poverty.

-They will probably disagree with you on that one. But okay. Two final questions. Back to presidential politics. Former vice president Joe Biden might be the president-elect in ten days time. Have you ever had any contact with him maybe in his vice-presidential role? And how do you take a Biden administration would deal with this conflict right there in your region?

-Yes, I met with vice-president Biden four years ago in Washington at the Nuclear Summit which was organized by President Obama. I had bilateral meeting with Mr. Biden and I saw that he was deeply involved in regional issues. We discussed many issues of our bilateral relations, of course, including Nagorno-Karabakh settlement. I can tell you that Obama's administration was very active on the Nagorno-Karabakh track. Therefore, Mr. Biden and I am sure the people who support him there are well aware about that. So, I have very good memory of our meeting with him.

-Do you think he will be favorable to your position? Will he be favorable to Armenia? Well, he probably will talk against war. I mean he probably will also push for a ceasefire, push for a diplomacy. Do you think that would be an okay approach?

-I think, taking into account what we have just discussed, the Armenian lobbying organizations in America, in France and Russia, for Azerbaijan the most favorable situation will be that the leaders of these three countries stay neutral on the conflict and don't take sides. Actually, that's what their mandate dictates them. If they take sides, they cannot be mediators. And we expect from the US foreign policy team in the future also, to be neutral, and to be objective.

-Finally Mr. President, your prediction for the future. I mean your region, your country, Armenia. Such horror late 80s and early 90s. Tens of thousands of people were killed. What are we looking now? Tens of thousands of people more killed? More destructions? How do you see this going forward?

-It is difficult to predict now what will happen. It not only depends on us, because the war is not held by one country. It is not a unilateral process. But how I want to see the region I can tell you. I want the region of the Southern Caucasus to be deeply integrated. I want that the strategic relations which we have with another South Caucasian country, Georgia, can be to certain degree a model of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia once in the future. Because all wars stop and peace comes. We know how...

-You think there can be a peaceful resolution of this conflict?

-Definitely.

-Fine, a diplomatic answer.

-I am absolutely confident. But it depends on the will from Armenian side. What happened after the second World War? Germany and the United States were killing each other. Soviet Union and Germany were killing each other. Tens of millions were killed. But look now. It is not any longer in the memory. It is not provoking hostility. Why Armenians and Azerbaijanis cannot live together in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, while they live together in Georgia, in Russia, in Ukraine, in many other countries? I think that the Southern Caucasus...

-Can be peace at the same time recognizing the rights of both sides?

-Yes, exactly. It must be based on the reasonable background, within the framework of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, with full protection of rights and concerns of Armenian population of Azerbaijan. That's I think, that is doable.

-Mr president, thank you very much for this lengthy interview and I am sure, we will inform not just me, but our American public.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

27.10.2020 [12:59]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has addressed the nation.
AZERTAC presents the address.

Address of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev

- Dear fellow compatriots!

The second Karabakh war has been going on for about a month. This war is a patriotic war for our people. We are liberating our homeland from occupiers. During this time, the glorious Azerbaijani Army has liberated many settlements from the enemy. We are restoring historical justice on the battlefield because Nagorno-Karabakh is ancient and historical land of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani people have lived and built on these lands for centuries. We know the history of Karabakh perfectly well. A great deal of work has been done in recent years to convey this history to the world community. In general, the world did not have much of an idea about Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. Armenian lobbying organizations operating in many countries were able to create a distorted image in the world, in international public opinion by circulating false information both about the history of the region and the history of the conflict. This is why sanctions were imposed on us even though it was our lands that were occupied, and these sanctions are still in force. In the early stages of our independence, the US Congress imposed sanctions on Azerbaijan, claiming that Azerbaijan is engaged in aggression against Armenia, and these sanctions are still in force. Can you imagine that? At that time, Azerbaijani diplomacy could not counter Armenian lies with any arguments. As a result of consistent work in recent years, we have informed the world community about the history of Karabakh, the history of the conflict, and all this work helps us today. The world already has a more objective view on this issue, a more objective vision. It is thanks to our tireless efforts that we have been able to achieve this. I am absolutely right when I say that we are restoring historical justice. I was able to prove to the whole world during the live debates at the Munich Security Conference that this is our historical land. I provided information about the Kurakchay peace treaty signed at the beginning of the 19th century. There was no information about this treaty in the world at all. Unfortunately, there was no extensive information about the Kurakchay treaty in Azerbaijan either. The Kurakchay peace agreement was signed by the Khan of Karabakh and Shusha, Ibrahimkhalil khan, on the other side a general of Tsarist Russia. This agreement is available on the Internet and everyone can see it. I am sure that after my words, a large international audience keenly following the current situation on the battlefield will go to these sites and see that there is not a word about the Armenian people in that agreement. The Armenian people were not here at that time. The Armenian people were brought to our ancestral lands after the Kurakchay, Gulustan and Turkmenchay peace treaties. They were deliberately brought and placed in Karabakh, one of the most fascinating corners of our country, and conditions were created for them. The objective of this was obvious – to change the religious composition in the new lands of the empire, to expel Muslims from their ancestral lands, drive them away and create a new reality. Unfortunately, they achieved this goal.

After that, the Armenian population was brought en masse from neighboring countries, settled in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, in the ancestral lands of the Azerbaijanis, and demonstrating their typical character, gradually began to take possession of all our lands. After the Bolshevik revolution in the early 20th century, there was a great danger that the Bolshevik government would hand over Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. The Caucasus Bureau has protocols dated July 1921. It is enough to look at the protocols of the Caucasus Bureau to see that there was such a threat. But I think that due to the efforts of Nariman Narimanov and others who correctly assessed the reality, they could not achieve this goal. The protocols of the Caucasus Bureau state that Nagorno-Karabakh should be kept as part of Azerbaijan. During all these years, fake Armenian scholars and patrons have been trying to prove that Stalin separated Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia and gave it to Azerbaijan. This is a lie! Open and look at the protocol of the Caucasus Bureau, which says that Nagorno-Karabakh should be kept as part of Azerbaijan! This once again confirms that this is our land. Unfortunately, after that, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region was established, and the region was given a special status. But I must also say that this was not a republic, but

a region. There was a lower level of self-government. It is enough to look at the history to see that the Armenians living there had great rights and opportunities.

In Soviet times, a few years before the conflict, separatist tendencies were widespread. However, there was no reason for that. Of the nine members of the bureau, the governing body of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, eight were Armenians and one was Azerbaijani, and he was the first secretary of the Communist Party of Shusha district. The first secretary, the head of the government, the chairman of the parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh were Armenians. What did they want? Azerbaijan invested so much in that region, built a railway there in the 1970s, the Sarsang water reservoir, the Madagiz water reservoir – I have restored its name – the Sugovushan water reservoir were built. All these investments were made at the expense of the state budget of Azerbaijan. However, the Armenians were ungrateful, took advantage of the situation and of the presence of anti-Azerbaijani leadership in Moscow, and separatist tendencies emerged in the region. What did they do prior to that? The Armenians had been making preparations for that. Heydar Aliyev was the target of these preparations. They understood perfectly well that the presence of Heydar Aliyev, his great authority in the Soviet leadership ruined their plans. Therefore, unfortunately, national traitors from Armenia and other places, from Azerbaijan were sending numerous anonymous letters to Moscow and carrying out a smear campaign in order to eliminate the Heydar Aliyev factor. Less than two weeks after Heydar Aliyev had resigned from all posts, Armenian separatists rose up and demanded that Nagorno-Karabakh be separated from Azerbaijan and annexed to Armenia. This was when the troubles of our people began. An illegal special committee was set up in Nagorno-Karabakh and an ardent pro-Armenian man was appointed its head. This, in fact, laid the groundwork for the secession of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, the then leaders of Azerbaijan simply observed all these dangerous events. They could not raise their voice, they did not have the courage, just kept their head down and did what they were told to do from Moscow. At that time, the people leading Azerbaijan did not have a gram of Azerbaijani blood. Although they were considered Azerbaijanis, they did not have a single gram of national spirit and were cosmopolitan people. They could not even speak the Azerbaijani language properly. This is the history of Nagorno-Karabakh. After that, large-scale military operations were launched against Azerbaijan and our lands were occupied.

The loss of Shusha and Lachin in May 1992 and the occupation of Kalbajar in April 1993 created a geographical link between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. There was no such connection before. The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region had no border with the Republic of Armenia.

Those tragic events somewhat created a new reality. After that, the issue was taken over by international mediators and the Minsk Group was established in 1992. The activities of the Minsk Group are obvious. After some time, the co-chairs of the Minsk Group concentrated almost all power in their hands and virtually monopolized the issue. In fact, the Minsk Group as a group was paralyzed and the three co-chair countries began to deal with this issue. But was there a result of that? There was not! There was no result for us, but there was one for Armenia. Armenia wanted the negotiations to last forever, Armenia wanted to deceive us forever, this issue to remain in a frozen state, and our lands to stay under occupation forever. But what did the Minsk Group do? Was it able to put pressure on the occupier? No! Did it want to put pressure on it? No! I have repeatedly raised the issue with them: if you want to see a solution, impose sanctions on Armenia. All this is in your hands. You are permanent members of the UN Security Council and can resolve any issue. In particular, officials of these countries say that they agree on this issue. This is also an interesting issue. How is it possible that in all other matters – nuclear weapons, the situation in the Middle East, the situation in Asia, the situation in Europe – their interests are completely different? What other issue do their interests overlap on? None! Only in the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. Why? Everyone understands that. This frozen state, of course, was in everyone's interests except ours – first of all, in Armenia's interests.

Armenia is conducting illegal settlement on these lands. Has anyone said a word? No! This crime, this international crime runs counter to the Geneva Conventions. Does anyone ask them why they are conducting illegal settlement? And even demonstrate it. You transfer and place Armenians from Arab countries in our cities, including Shusha. Nobody says a word. What does this mean? It means go on, bring them here and settle as many as you want, Armenianize these lands and erase the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan. That was the message. Didn't these three countries have the opportunity to show the aggressor its place? They didn't want to. This reality suited them.

Therefore, it is impossible to assess the activities of the Minsk Group otherwise. We were being pushed to accept this situation, as it were. We were being told that new realities had emerged and that we must reckon with them. We have created a new reality. Everyone has to reckon with the new reality now. But what do we see? Notice what is happening when we began to liberate our lands from the occupiers. Look at the strong pressure being put on Azerbaijan from all sides. They have started running around. What happened? For 28 years, this issue dragged on and they pretended to be addressing it. They kept coming and going, there were endless meetings and negotiations. We are fed up with these negotiations. How long can one negotiate with the enemy? In addition, the enemy becomes impudent, and they tell us, no, there is no military option and the issue must be resolved only peacefully. Who says there isn't? Isn't this a military solution now? What are we doing? We are single-handedly implementing UN Security Council resolutions although this is the responsibility of the UN Security Council. We are doing this alone. We have created a new reality. Reckon with it! But what do we see? There is a meeting here, a meeting there. What about the ceasefire? Who has violated the ceasefire? This means that all their activities are now aimed at saving Armenia, an aggressor that committed the Khojaly genocide, attacked Ganja with ballistic missiles from the territory of Armenia. This is their activity.

As far as the ceasefire is concerned, the first time the ceasefire entered into force on 10 October. My position was that this should be of a humanitarian nature, and we agreed to this in order to exchange the bodies of the dead, hostages and prisoners. However, less than a day later, Armenia flagrantly and insidiously violated the ceasefire by bombing Ganja at night. Then, on 17 October, a new ceasefire was declared. And again, Armenia violated it two minutes later. This morning, at 8 o'clock, a new proposal came in. But when I inquired about at 9 o'clock in the morning, Armenia violated the ceasefire a few minutes later by firing on Tartar district again. However, I have instructed the Azerbaijani army again to show restraint for the time being and not to succumb to provocations. My position is known to my people. This issue must be resolved either by military or by peaceful means. I suggested: if you want a peaceful solution, well, we will stop. But we must be told immediately that Armenia is leaving our lands. A timetable should be provided – after how many days they would leave a particular district, after how many days they would leave the next district and after how many days they would leave other districts. A timetable should be provided. Has Armenia provided this timetable? It has not. This being the case, if the ceasefire continues and the issue remains frozen again, this cannot suit us. This is the first thing.

Secondly, we have accurate information that Armenia is already on its knees on the battlefield and simply wants to take advantage of the ceasefire to mobilize its resources again, wants to re-arm and pursue a new policy of aggression against us. There is such information and, unfortunately, over the past month, weapons, various types of weapons have been supplied to Armenia in large quantities. We have all the lists. Some of them have been published in our media. There is a whole list of when and what plane arrived, where it arrived, what it brought, how it was offloaded and where the cargo was sent? Then why are those interested in a ceasefire sending weapons to Armenia? After all, Armenia is already on its knees. We have already hit it on the head so that it can hardly recover. The prime minister of Armenia, who danced in a drunken state on Jidirduzu and behaved like a great commander, now falls at everyone's feet asking for help, begging for assistance, humiliating himself and humiliating his people. Just don't give them weapons and it will be over. Don't give them weapons. Who gives anything to us? Nobody! Don't give them weapons. If you want this to end, don't give them weapons. He will surely come round in a couple of days. On the one hand, there is talk of a ceasefire, but on the other, weapons are being sent to them. What is this? Are we supposed to be silent about this?

The people of Azerbaijan should know everything. For 17 years in my capacity as President, I have always told the truth to the Azerbaijani people – always. I regularly report to the people on all the issues. And I am doing that to this day. This may not be complete information because there are certain diplomatic rules. However, whatever can be said, I say to the Azerbaijani people and the whole world. If you want to save Armenia, tell it to leave our lands, get away immediately! Let this jester, who danced in Shusha, on Jidirduzu, in a drunken state declare that he is leaving. Calling world leaders five or six times a day will not solve the problem. Our position remains unchanged, we are defending the truth and justice.

I would like to touch upon another issue. The legal framework for the settlement of the conflict is quite broad. We have expanded this framework. Today, there are not only UN Security Council resolutions, but also other documents. The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the European Parliament and other organizations. The

document we have initialed with the European Union contains a special provision on the sovereignty of our country, the inviolability of our borders and territorial integrity. In other words, it is a legal framework that allows us the opportunity to teach the enemy a lesson on the battlefield, to drive them away, to remove them from our lands. But look at what is going on lately? The Minsk Group co-chairing countries have convened a meeting of the UN Security Council. They have done it once before. Apparently, the document adopted there did not satisfy them. This time, a few days ago, we heard about the appearance of a new document. We immediately took action and prevented the adoption of this document even though the three co-chair countries exerted great pressure on other members of the UN Security Council.

What was the purpose of this? The goal is very clear – to overshadow the resolutions adopted in 1993 demanding the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from our lands, to leave them in the past so that they lose their power and significance. This was the goal. How fair is this? We saw further attempts to provide support to the occupier. What is the result? It did not pass. How? The member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement stood up like real men and did not allow this to happen, they supported us – I say thank you to them. And this happened despite the fact that they came under pressure and may have even been threatened. But they stood up like men for us just as we stand up for them. This shows that nothing will work. My dear brother, the President of the Republic of Turkey has repeatedly said that the world is bigger than five countries. And he is absolutely right. This vote proved it. They joined their forces and put forward another document that meets the interests of Armenia, but it did not work out.

Because justice prevailed. No matter how hard they tried, justice prevailed. Justice and international law are on our side. Therefore, we will continue to go our own way. If they want a ceasefire, then let them tell the occupying state to go away, to leave our lands. Otherwise, we will go to the end, all the way. And we will continue to drive the enemy away, as we have been doing. They are already running away from us and we will continue to chase them. Because we are right and we are strong.

As I have been saying for the past few years, the world is not the same any longer. The force factor comes to the fore and this was not done by us. Take a look – do large states reckon with international law today? No! Do they reckon with the UN Security Council? No! Everyone does what they want in their places, one enters there, another one enters there, the third one divides some territories. There is no semblance of international law. So why should we defend it? We are defending it anyway and are not taking steps outside the law. We are not entering the territory of Armenia, we are restoring the territories recognized by the international community. If the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the co-chairs of the Minsk Group could not do this, then let them step aside and not interfere. Unlike Armenia, we do not ask anyone for help. Let them not interfere and test the patience of the Azerbaijani people. This war will end tomorrow and we will achieve our goal. What will our relationship be like? Will the Azerbaijani people forget this injustice? They will not. Let them give this a thought. Today, Azerbaijan is not a state the interests of which can be ignored. No! The day will come when they will come here with requests and proposals, including those on cooperation. How will they look in our eyes? They have mobilized all their forces against us today. I have been putting up with this for a month, a whole month. I was silent about it, but we are fed up. This is the first thing.

Second, the mediator must be neutral. If it is not impartial, then it should give up its candidacy. If a mediator is not neutral, then it cannot be a mediator. The mediating countries should now come up with new functions for themselves. What will they do? They can no longer talk about the liberation of five districts. Where are these five districts now? Four of them are already with us. This question is already in the past, it is over. We have taken them back ourselves – Fuzuli, Zangilan, Jabrayil, Gubadli. Most of these districts are with us. We also have a part of the former Hadru and currently Khojavand district. So let them think.

We are not against negotiations. As a result of yesterday's talks in the United States, the decision was made to hold a meeting between the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Geneva in a few days. I don't mind that, let them meet. Over the course of these 28 years, there have been so many useless meetings, so there is no difference. I do not mean to say that I regard this meeting as useless. No. We want it to make sense. And this should speed up the settlement of the conflict. The patrons of Armenia, I appeal to you: if you want to save this fake state, tell it to get out. One word of yours is enough for it to get out – just one word. If Armenia is not provided with financial, economic, military and political support, will it be able to stand on its feet? No! I will provide the Azerbaijani people with some data on their equipment we have destroyed. Everyone can count this, go online, see the cost of this equipment and ask a question.

Where does this poor and impoverished country get all this? Where does this money come from in a country that is mired in problems? We have already destroyed so much of their equipment and they are still bringing more. Never mind, let them bring it, they know better.

This is our position at this stage, and we are ready to resolve this issue by military-political means. But it must be resolved. The ceasefire has been declared, alright, let there be a ceasefire. Armenia has violated it, we are recording every violation, every single one. I have given the instruction to record every violation. This information is immediately sent to the OSCE representative and other countries interested in the ceasefire, so that they can see how many times the Armenians have violated it. We have all the data. A military-political solution should resolve the issue of restoring the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

As for the future of the Armenians who were settled on our ancestral lands 200 years ago, I have said that they are our citizens too. They must also get rid of this junta. If they cannot save themselves, we will help them. Didn't the new government of Armenia represented by Pashinyan say that those who governed Armenia are criminals? I was saying exactly the same. What happens if those who governed the country before Pashinyan for 20 years were criminals? What is this country then? It is a criminal country. The two ex-presidents also headed the junta in Karabakh and then led Armenia. A criminal case has been opened against both. They are criminals who sucked the blood of the Armenians living in Karabakh. Where did they get so much property, wealth and fortune? Where? They got it by sucking the blood of the Armenian people. So I repeat: the people living in Nagorno-Karabakh are our citizens. The Azerbaijani people are tolerant. These people are not to blame. Whoever is to blame is being brought to account, and I said that the blood of the Azerbaijani people would not remain unavenged. The criminals who committed the Khojaly genocide have already been destroyed in the battles that have lasted for a month. Justice has prevailed. Therefore, I want to reiterate my position. We will definitely return to these lands by military-political means. The military stage may end today. We will resolve the issue politically. Azerbaijanis will return to Shusha, Azerbaijanis will return to Khankandi. They will return to all other places where they used to live. Conditions will be created for the Armenian population. We must gradually learn to live together, both them and us. I see it this way, and my approach is based both on the norms of morality and on the norms of international law. Armenia wants to drive us out of there, then to carry out ethnic cleansing, to Armenianize our sites, to settle Armenians from abroad. Pashinyan, you wanted to build a road to Jabrayil? So? Where is this road? You wanted to build a parliament building in Shusha? So? It all went to hell.

I want to say again that no force can make us deviate from our path. Successes on the battlefield have created a new reality at the negotiating table.

Now I want to share some information with my dear people. I am presenting a list of the enemy's equipment and military booty we have destroyed and taken over since 27 September. So 252 tanks have been destroyed, 53 tanks have been taken as booty – in total Armenia has lost 305 tanks. But they still have more. Look how many tanks they had. Fifty infantry fighting vehicles have been destroyed, 29 have been taken as booty – a total of 79 units. Then, 251 guns of various calibers have been destroyed, 24 have been taken as booty – 275 in total. Sixty-one mortars have been destroyed, 45 were taken as booty – 106 in total. Fifty-three anti-tank weapons have been destroyed, 82 Grad installations have been destroyed. Two units of "Hurricane" multiple launch rocket system have been destroyed. One "TOS" unit has been destroyed, four anti-aircraft missile systems "TOR", about 40 "OSA" installations, four "KUB" complexes, one "KRUG", two "S-125" have been destroyed. Six S-300 launchers, one of the most expensive launchers, have been destroyed. One detection station and one locator. The price is well known. Everyone can count this. We have destroyed two "Elbrus" and one "Tochka-U" operational-tactical missile systems. Trucks – 231 trucks have been destroyed, including 20 with ammunition, 173 trucks have been taken as booty. In total, we have deprived the enemy of 404 trucks.

Now I will ask the question again. I will keep asking this question every time. I will keep asking it until there is an answer. Where does this money come from? Let the pro-Armenian observers, mediators, political scientists tell where it comes from. We have money and everything is transparent. The people of Azerbaijan know how much money we have, the world knows, everyone knows. We are buying it with our own money. We don't depend on anyone. How did this bankrupt country buy this? Armenia's external debt is about \$8 billion. Foreign exchange reserves amount to \$1.5 billion. In fact, these are not free funds. These are bank reserves. They cannot use them. If they use it, then their so-called currency will fly somersaults. Who gave you so many weapons? Why doesn't anyone ask? During this month, I give interviews every

day. They ask me what Turkish F-16s are doing in Azerbaijan. I am tired of answering. Open up satellite images, can't you see what they are doing? Go and see what F-16s are doing. Are they in the air or on the ground? Everyone knows that they are on the ground. They arrived for exercises and stayed behind when the war broke out. Our Turkish brothers left them here to give us moral support. But if we are attacked from outside, they will see these F-16s. There are only five or six planes left at the airport and they ask about it every time. I answer these questions. But ask Armenia too, ask those who give them weapons. Ask these questions – why are you giving Armenia weapons? Have they been paid for? Do the citizens of the countries producing these weapons know how much of their goods was lost in a matter of one month? Do they know how much weaponry we have destroyed? No journalist asks me this question. Isn't this interesting? It is interesting. Never mind. We are already accustomed to the fact that for all these years, slander, lies and fabrications against Azerbaijan have shown no sign of abating. Both foreign media and the Azerbaijani people see that I am answering all these questions and answering them properly. And I do not stoop to their level. Never! I answer them properly and they are silenced. They cannot answer. I say – go look in the mirror. Did you come here to blame us? They don't ask questions, they act like a prosecutor, accuse us. Who are you? I respect journalists a lot. Therefore, they take advantage of that. I speak to them in a calm manner. But they should know that I can talk to them in any form. This is a reality. This reality is against us. But we have changed this reality. These new lists show again that we have changed this reality.

Now, it is with great satisfaction and pride that I will bring to the attention of my people the list the Azerbaijani people are looking forward to. So I am informing my dear people of the list of settlements liberated yesterday. The following villages have been liberated in Zangilan district: First Alibayli, Second Alibayli, Raband, Yenikand. Liberated villages of Jabrayil district: Govshudlu, Sofulu, Dagh Mashanli, Kurdlar, Hovuslu, Chalabilar. The settlements of Gubadli district liberated yesterday: Padar, Afandilar, Yusifbayli, Chaytumas, Khanlig, Sariyatag, Mollaburkhan and the city of Gubadli!

I already shared this good news with the Azerbaijani people yesterday. I want to convey this joyful news to the entire Azerbaijani people again. It is a great honor for me to bring joyful news to the residents of Zangilan, Jabrayil and Gubadli districts who lived in these villages. True, there is nothing left of these villages. But never mind, we will restore them. Both the Azerbaijani people and the state have enough strength to do that. If only our lands were free. If only our flag was raised in all the liberated lands. We are liberating these lands at the cost of the life and blood of our soldiers and officers. We have asserted ourselves both on the battlefield and on the political plane, we have asserted ourselves in the world. We have asserted the Azerbaijani people as a proud people, as a brave people, as an invincible people. No pressure can affect us. No threat can turn us off our path because we are on a fair path, we are united like a fist. This unity is eternal and will be eternal!

Dear compatriots, I promised you on the first days of the war that we would drive the enemy away from our lands, drive them away to the end. Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Italian Rai 1 TV channel

27.10.2020 [20:52]

As reported earlier, on 26 October President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by the Italian Rai 1 TV channel.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

- Mr. President, good afternoon. Please tell us if this new truce, this new ceasefire will hold. If I am not mistaken, this is the third ceasefire.

- Everything will depend on how Armenia behaves because the first two ceasefires were disrupted by Armenia. After the first ceasefire, which was declared for humanitarian considerations, Armenia violated the ceasefire within 24 hours and barbarically launched a ballistic missile at the city of Ganja at night. As a result of the first shelling, 10 people were killed and many were wounded. Then they hit Ganja again, and also at night. There were even more victims. So we had to answer. As for the second truce, we have a chronology of Armenia's violations of the ceasefire. They violated it literally two minutes after the appointed hour of the truce. Today, at 8 o'clock, a new truce came into force. Now it is 10 o'clock in the morning in Baku. At about 3-4 minutes after the ceasefire entered into force at 8 o'clock, several shells were fired at the city of Tartar again. We are not reacting to this. We hope this was an accident, but if this continues, we will be forced to respond adequately.

- Mr. President, what actually caused the outbreak of hostilities at the end of September? Why did this happen?

- There was a series of events of political and military nature. Armenia's main goal was to disrupt the process of negotiations in every possible way. The new government of Armenia has repeatedly stated that the fundamental principles are unacceptable for it, that it is not going to return a single centimeter of the occupied territories, which contradicts the fundamental principles. The prime minister stated that we should negotiate not with Armenia but with the so-called leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is unacceptable both for us and for the OSCE Minsk Group. He also stated that 'Karabakh is Armenia, full stop', thereby completely undermining the negotiations. In the past year, there were practically no negotiations, and in order to shift the blame on us, Armenia made three sabotage attempts – in July on the border, in August when they sent a sabotage group, and in September when they shelled our cities. They probably thought that we would show restraint again, but that did not happen. We answered them in a manner that they are now regretting it.

- On what conditions will you agree to stop the hostilities then? You have repeatedly spoken about the need for a constructive approach on the part of Armenia. What should a constructive approach be like?

- A constructive approach should be that they must publicly declare, through the prime minister, that they accept the fundamental principles. The fundamental principles envisage the return of seven districts located around the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region to Azerbaijan and the return of Azerbaijani refugees to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha. These approaches are, in principle, based on four UN Security Council resolutions, which require practically the same. But when the Armenian prime minister says that not a single centimeter of land will be given to us, when the Armenian defense minister says that Armenia will start a new war for new territories and when aggression is carried out against us, this is not a constructive approach, of course. He must say that yes, the occupied territories will be returned to Azerbaijan, that the Azerbaijanis will return to Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha, and then, of course, we will come to an agreement very quickly.

- Mr. President, there is one very controversial issue. Some countries, not only Armenia, but also France, have somehow accused you and Turkey of sending thousands of mercenaries, jihadists from Syria to Karabakh via Turkey. How will you respond to such accusations, and how will you respond to the accusations that speak of the presence of Turkish troops and Turkish military aircraft on the territory of Azerbaijan?

- I have already answered this question many times and I will answer it again. First, such unfounded accusations were brought against us by only two countries – France and Russia. France said that through the President, Russia through the head of the Foreign Intelligence Service. These charges were brought against us immediately after the outbreak of hostilities. Although almost a month has already passed, not a

single piece of evidence, no proof was provided to us. In fact, I will say this for the first time – I asked the French side for the heads of relevant agencies to meet, discuss the issue and provide us with evidence. Nothing was presented to us. Therefore, these are all insinuations. All this is an attempt to cast a shadow on Azerbaijan. I regret that such unfounded accusations come from the co-chair countries, which are supposed to be objective. After all, we do not talk every day about how many weapons are supplied from Russia to Armenia. We do not talk about the fact that Armenia would not have lasted a day in the occupied territories without external assistance. Political support, military support, moral support – all this comes from countries that are supposed to stay neutral. Therefore, we strongly reject these insinuations. It is not necessary. We have 100,000 soldiers of the regular army. If necessary, we will announce overall mobilization, which, by the way, we have not done unlike Armenia. Therefore, this is all lies and slander. As for the participation of Turkish troops in operations, this is also a lie. There is not a single piece of evidence. The fact that Turkish F-16s are on the territory of Azerbaijan was a result of our joint military exercises on the eve of the conflict. We do not talk about how many Russian MIG-29s and Su-30s are on the territory of Armenia. We do not talk about the fact that 5,000 Russian troops are located at the base in Armenia in Gumru and, according to our data, there are periodical supplies of the Armenian armed forces from there. These are facts, in contrast to what is being said about us. Therefore, I suggest that those who want to accuse us first deal with themselves and then make such hasty conclusions based on false information.

- Mr. President, my last question more or less also concerns our country, Italy. You probably know that in Europe there are many successful examples of a peaceful settlement of territorial disputes or separatism. We have one of such examples in Italy. It is Alto Adige/Südtirol. Don't you think that Italy could help you with its experience in resolving the status of Karabakh? Moreover, Italy has very good, close and strong political and cultural relations with you and also with Armenia.

- Yes, I believe that Italy can play a very important role in the settlement of the conflict. I must say that when the Minsk Group was formed, a very long time ago, almost 30 years ago, it was the Italian representative, the Italian diplomat who was the leader of this Minsk Group. That was before the institution of co-chairs was established. After the institution of the co-chairs was created, the Minsk Group as a group of countries did not produce any results because the co-chairs took this activity into their monopoly. We know what this has led to. For 28 years, there has been no progress, no results, only promises, only bureaucratic procedures. In essence, it seems to us today that the activities of the co-chairs were aimed at freezing the conflict, not at resolving it. As for the model that exists in Italy, we have studied it. We also studied the model of the Aland Islands and other successful autonomy experiences. Azerbaijan, unlike Armenia, is a multiethnic state. In Armenia, as you probably know, 99 percent of the population are Armenians. Therefore, this is a very positive experience of self-government which could be applied in our case. In fact, as far as I know, such proposals were made in the mid-1990s. Even groups of representatives of non-governmental organizations and political scientists have visited your country, the region you are talking about, and the Aland Islands. But Armenia has always categorically rejected this. They believed that they would be able to occupy our territories forever relying on military, political and economic support from leading countries of the world, but they made a gross miscalculation. We are proving our case on the battlefield today. We are implementing UN Security Council resolutions and are restoring international law.

- Mr. President, the very last question: at what level will we be in this conflict in one year? Or will it already be resolved by then?

- You know, I communicate with representatives of foreign media almost every day during this month, and in my addresses to the Azerbaijani people I always clearly state our position. We see the future of the Karabakh region – not only the upper part of it but also the plain because Karabakh is a large part of Azerbaijan – as a prosperous and peaceful territory where Azerbaijanis, who must return there, and the Armenians who now live there will live in peace. Our position is this. I believe that this can be achieved with mutual goodwill of the parties. After all, thousands of Armenians live in Baku and other cities of Azerbaijan today. The Azerbaijanis and Armenians have joint businesses in Russia and Georgia. There are mixed families. Therefore, I think that reconciliation is possible. The Armenian leadership should simply abandon its aggressive policy. And if this happens, with our investments and our experience of rebuilding the country, we can turn this region into one of the most prosperous regions in the world. But for this to happen, the consequences of the war must be eliminated. The occupation must be eliminated,

Azerbaijanis must return to the lands where they have lived for centuries, and live in harmony with the Armenian population. It will not be easy and it will take time. But we know how countries were reconciled after World War II, when European countries were at war – the current neighbors, and many people were killed. But this should not sit in the memory all the time and produce hatred, which is what Armenian ideologists are doing today. Goodwill must be shown. If that happens, what I am saying will happen. If not, we will return these lands anyway. And the current state of affairs on the battlefield is showing that. We will return them at any cost. Either peacefully or war, but we will return them. Therefore, I think the Armenian leadership should seriously think about it and take the right step.

- **Thank you very much, Mr. President, and as they say in Italian, Bono Fortuno!**
- Thank you, all the best to you too. Thank you!
- **Goodbye!**
- Goodbye!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Russian Interfax agency

30.10.2020 [17:13]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by Russian Interfax agency.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

- Thank you, Mr. President, for finding the time for an interview with our agency despite your busy schedule. It was exactly one month yesterday since the counter- offensive of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces began in Nagorno- Karabakh. How would you assess this month from the point of view of the military- political settlement of the conflict?

- The Azerbaijani army has demonstrated its advantage on the battlefield. Significant parts of the occupied territories have been liberated in one month. Given that the Armenian side had been building fortifications in the occupied lands for almost 30 years, there were several lines of defense. Also, the terrain itself is more favorable for the Armenian side. It is mountainous and our servicemen had to overcome both engineering fortifications and mountainous terrain when carrying out the counterattack. Despite all these factors, significant territories in the occupied lands of our country have been liberated in one month, and this shows that the Azerbaijani army is considered one of the most combat- effective armies in the world for a reason. According to the rankings periodically published by organizations that assess the military potential of countries, the Azerbaijani army is among top 50 armies in the world. The professionalism, training, combat effectiveness and, most importantly, fighting morale have certainly contributed to our success in many respects. And, of course, the equipment available to the Azerbaijani army. We have liberated the cities of Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Gubadli, a part of Khojavand district. The successful mission, the successful advance of the Azerbaijani army continues. I have said several times during this month that we want the settlement of the conflict to move from a military to a political phase. But, unfortunately, the Armenian side has grossly violated the ceasefire regime for the third time, attempted to re- occupy the territories we have liberated, and is pushing for a continuation of the confrontation. Therefore, I am answering your question again: the military- political settlement is the only possible way. We would like the military phase to end and issues of further de- occupation of Azerbaijani territories to be resolved at the negotiating table.

- Mr. President, you noted that Baku is interested in completing the military phase as quickly as possible. How long do you think it can last at the present time and is Baku ready to be content with seven districts around Nagorno- Karabakh?

- I have repeatedly said in my appeals to the Azerbaijani people and in numerous interviews this month that we are ready to stop at any moment, even today. But for this to happen, the Armenian side must commit to withdrawing its troops from the rest of the occupied territories. Therefore, I cannot predict how long the military confrontation will last. It depends on the Armenian side. As I said, their constant attempts to recapture our lands have failed. I think this should already be enough for them to understand that they will not achieve anything by military means. Unfortunately, on the political plane they are demonstrating a non- constructive approach, as I said, and have grossly violated the ceasefire three times. Based on this, of course, we will continue to plan on further action. As for the occupied territories, of course, the Azerbaijanis must return to all the occupied territories where they used to live, and this has always been my approach. Not only to the seven occupied districts outside Nagorno- Karabakh, outside the former Nagorno- Karabakh autonomous region, but also to the territories, to the lands they had lived on for centuries. First of all, these are Shusha, Khankandi and other lands that have been inhabited by Azerbaijanis for centuries. I also said that our vision for a settlement lies in the co- existence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani population of Nagorno- Karabakh. It so happened historically that the Armenian population has been living on these lands for 200 years. We all know the history of the resettlement of Armenians from Eastern Anatolia and Iran. But it so happened. They have lived there for 200 years. And we have no objection to the continued presence of the Armenian population. On the contrary, I have always said that thousands of citizens of Armenian nationality live in Azerbaijan, that Armenians and Azerbaijanis live together in neighboring countries and get along quite well. Why can't this be achieved in Nagorno- Karabakh? Our vision is this: Azerbaijanis should return to all the territories they lived in. The Armenian population should also live on this land. And in the conditions of good neighborliness, we will strive to heal the wounds of war.

- So it means that Baku will not stop until Armenian servicemen withdraw from all the occupied territories.

- We need the Armenian side in the person of its leadership to undertake a commitment to withdraw troops from the occupied territories. We haven't heard that yet. As soon as this commitment is made by the Armenian leadership and as soon as it is confirmed and approved by OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, we are ready to stop military action immediately. And provided that the Armenian side also stops it because all three violations of the ceasefire were committed by the Armenian side. Four civilians, including a seven-year-old girl, were killed as a result of a cluster missile attack on Barda yesterday. This is not a conflict zone. So this is a flagrant violation of the ceasefire, which was agreed in Washington. Prior to that, the ceasefire agreed in Moscow was violated by the Armenian side the next day when they launched a ballistic missile from the territory of Armenia to Ganja. And as a result of this, 10 people died. As a result of the second ballistic missile attack on Ganja, even more people died. There are about 30 victims in a peaceful city. Therefore, it is not our fault that the ceasefire is not observed. Therefore, the Armenian side must undertake that they will withdraw from the occupied territories they are still holding under occupation: these include a part of Aghdam district, the entire Lachin district and most of Kalbajar district. And then we will be ready, of course, to move on to a political settlement. It will cover many aspects. In principle, we have accepted the fundamental principles, while the Armenian side has rejected them. But the Armenian prime minister's aggressive statement yesterday suggests that they say one thing to the mediators and do something completely different.

- Mr. President, you have said that Baku is mainly committed to the fundamental principles. The first point of these principles was the liberation of five districts around Nagorno-Karabakh. But at present, four out of five districts have already been liberated by the Azerbaijani army. It turns out that, at a minimum, the fundamental principles are either not relevant or need some adjustment.

- This will depend on the behavior of the Armenian side again. As you know, negotiations between the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia are to be held in Geneva tomorrow. There we will see how committed the Armenian side is to the fundamental principles. After that, we will give our assessment of how relevant they are now not, although I have repeatedly stated during this month that Azerbaijan accepts them in general, there are certain aspects that do not suit us, of course, but we accept them in general. As for the return of five districts at the first stage, of course, this is no longer relevant because the fundamental principles determined the sequence of territories to be returned – five districts at the first stage, and Kalbajar and Lachin districts at the second. Then comes the return of Azerbaijanis to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, in principle, the return of all refugees to the places of their original residence. We have almost completed the first stage. Therefore, if the Armenian side expresses its adherence to the fundamental principles, we will talk about an immediate transfer of Lachin, Kalbajar and a part of Aghdam district that are still under occupation to Azerbaijan. Thus, we will somewhat facilitate the work of mediators because one of the important issues will already be implemented and we will not have to wait for a second stage. It must come right away. If we agree on a political settlement, then Armenian troops should withdraw from Kalbajar and Lachin districts and a part of Aghdam district immediately.

- You have already touched upon tomorrow's meeting of foreign ministers and outlined the overall expectations of Baku. I would like to clarify if Baku still expects the Armenian side to show constructivism and the negotiations to be more substantive, not abstract and broad?

- I think we are still hopeful. Although the aggressive conduct of the Armenian side and the fact that they are flagrantly violating international law, the Geneva Conventions, and committing war crimes does not suggest that they are going to discuss the substance of the settlement issue, of course. Attacking peaceful cities with cluster munitions is a war crime. We have 69 civilians killed and more than 300 injured as a result of Armenian shelling. This is the face of Armenian fascism. At the same time, I think that the defeat we have inflicted on Armenia on the battlefield should nevertheless be a serious signal for them that they can no longer imitate things, deceive us, deceive the co-chairs of the Minsk Group and essentially evade substantive discussions. As for the process of negotiations, there was practically none for the past year, even more than a year. This was the first time this has happened since the 1994 truce. Because since then, the negotiations have been going on with varying degree of intensity and the parties have agreed on provisions of the fundamental principles. They did not fall from the sky. These were the principles proposed by the Minsk Group, its co-chairs, and agreed by the parties. Therefore, there was a process, albeit slow, and some progress was being made. But after the new government came to power in Armenia, they gave

us and, as far as I know, the mediators, promises in the first year. But in the second year, they openly demonstrated their true intention that they would not give up a single centimeter of the land. Moreover, they threatened us with a new war for new territories. In fact, these were the words of their Minister of Defense who has been completely discredited as Minister of Defense both in the eyes of his own people and in the eyes of the world community. And after such a humiliating defeat, I am surprised he hasn't resigned yet.

- What is your assessment of remarks by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who on the one hand uses belligerent rhetoric but on the other hand says that Armenia should prepare for painful compromises, then changes his tone again? What is behind this?

- It is hard for me to comment on this. I would probably abstain from an assessment of what is happening to the Armenian prime minister. Probably, this military defeat influenced his state, otherwise how one can explain the series of inconsistent statements and actions that are absolutely irrational and harmful, primarily for himself as the country's leader and dangerous and harmful for his country?

Many people ask why the clashes happened now and not before. Even those who have a biased approach to Azerbaijan and openly support Armenia would ask this question. Twenty-six years have passed since the 1994 truce. There were clashes, there were victims over those years, but not on such a scale. So what has happened? Nothing has changed in Azerbaijan.

I have been engaged in settlement of negotiations for 17 years, and I have gone a long way towards agreeing on the fundamental principles together with the two previous Armenian presidents. That is why it is clear to impartial observers that it is not our fault. This is the fault of the inappropriate, irrational, and dangerous conduct of the Armenian prime minister.

No former Armenian leader ever allowed insulting innuendos regarding the Azerbaijani people. None of them allowed the Nagorno-Karabakh head to be inaugurated in Shusha. None of them prided themselves on the demonstrative violation of the Geneva Convention showing the resettlement of the Lebanese Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha. And so on and so forth.

So these are the results of the ill-conceived and dangerous activity of Prime Minister Pashinyan. I wouldn't comment on his statements inside the country. But what he does concerning the settlement is very dangerous for Armenia itself. Today, Armenia can clearly see this. That is why I think that the Minsk Group co-chairs should clearly raise this issue before the Armenian foreign minister, who, as I understand, is in a very difficult situation. He has to answer for the inappropriate conduct of his leader, and in fact he deserves sympathy. He will have to get himself out of this and somehow explain his series of inconsistent actions.

On the one hand, he speaks about painful concessions, on the other hand, he says that there is no diplomatic solution. First, he says that he is ready for a compromise but then he says that he will defend Karabakh until the very end. On the one hand, he says that Karabakh is Armenia, but then he says that we should negotiate with Nagorno-Karabakh. This is an absolutely mutually exclusive palette of inadequacy. So I think that many issues of these will be clarified tomorrow.

- In your latest address to the Azerbaijani people, you quite severely criticized the mediators for essentially being inactive. Does this mean that Baku will insist on changing the Minsk Group format?

- I have spoken many times about the activity of the OSCE Minsk Group over the past month. And what I said in the address to the Azerbaijani people is the absolute truth. Any format, no matter what it is called and who it involves, should acknowledge its ineffectiveness if it doesn't fulfill the set task. And the set task has not been fulfilled. Although I cannot deny that the Minsk Group made attempts to reach a settlement, because fundamental principles were elaborated with its assistance. They worked and they proposed options. There were some things we didn't agree with, there were some things that the Armenian side didn't agree with. So that was a process that had lasted until Pashinyan came to power in Armenia.

But from the point of view of effectiveness and efficiency, the Minsk Group, of course, didn't justify itself, I mean the activity of the co-chairs. Should the co-chairs be other countries, this could have been explained by their insufficient international weight, by their lack of authority to implement even the UN Security Council resolutions that they had adopted themselves. But when the Minsk Group co-chairs are three members of the UN Security Council, when three nuclear powers cannot exert pressure on Armenia, this, of course, raises a lot of questions.

As for the composition, I have already said that the Minsk Group was set up in 1992. I don't know how it was set up and what principles underlie the choice of its members. But as I said, if we formed a

contact group today, its composition would, of course, have been completely different. It would include countries that have their positions in the region and that have potential and authority in the world. Of course, I think the countries that are current co-chairs could probably remain there. But this is not a question for me, because the mechanism and the procedure of forming the Minsk Group and its co-chairs is the prerogative of the OSCE.

I think that we should not cling to formalities in order to settle the conflict. The Minsk Group as such can continue working, but we should think about new cooperation mechanisms between the countries of the region in order to practically reach a political settlement. I think that Russian President Vladimir Putin probably meant the same when he spoke about this.

- In this regard, some experts propose the 2+2 formula. How acceptable is it to Baku?

- Two is Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the other two?

- Turkey and Russia.

- This would be acceptable to us, because Turkey and Russia are our neighbors and countries with which we have close mutual relations and countries with good potential for cooperation among themselves. It is enough to look at the history of the past few years. Turkey and Russia have reached a high level of mutual understanding on many issues, including the bilateral agenda and the international security agenda. We see that in Syria and in Libya, and in tackling issues of countering international terrorism, to say nothing of energy projects, economic, investment projects.

Even before this escalation, I said that we have always welcomed the rapprochement of Turkey and Russia. I believe that this is an important factor of regional security. Considering that Armenian separatism is the main threat for us, and not only for us but for the entire region, I believe that combining the efforts of Turkey and Russia would benefit the region and could accelerate the political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

- Mr. President, you have repeatedly said that the mediators should apply sanctions against Armenia in order to secure a breakthrough in the settlement process. What might be at issue?

- I have been talking about it for a long time, but regrettably my calls remain unanswered. What sanctions could be applied? Sanctions that would make Armenia fulfill the UN Security Council resolutions and withdraw its troops from the occupied territories. For example, we could have a look at the sanctions that were imposed on Iraq after its occupation of Kuwait. Similar things took place from the point of view of international law. The internationally recognized territory of Kuwait was occupied by Iraq, war crimes were committed, ethnic cleansing occurred, and only the timely reaction of the international community helped stop this occupation. And that happened within a short period of time. Next, economic sanctions, an arms embargo were imposed on Iraq. Iraq became a no-fly zone. War criminals, who committed crimes against humanity, were brought to justice and sentenced.

All these sanctions should be applied to Armenia. Even if one of these sanctions had been applied, I am sure the conflict would have been resolved long ago. There has simply been no political will and desire to apply these sanctions. And more likely the position that prevailed was that as long as there is no escalation, let's leave everything as it is.

- Is it frozen?

- Frozen, of course. Although everyone understood that this cannot last forever. Everyone understood this 10 years ago. The presidents of Russia, the US and France made statements, and said clearly many times that the status quo was unacceptable.

Well, fine. We welcomed this, and I remember this was praised in our country, I commented on this. But what happened next? Then they began to depart from this thesis gradually, stopped voicing it and invented a new thesis that the status quo is unstable. And we can clearly understand that these are completely different things. So the co-chairing countries moved away even from a political attempt to exert pressure on Armenia. And it was common knowledge that the status quo was unstable. And recent events proved this.

This is why, let me repeat that again, it is not too late to apply sanctions in order to end the conflict as soon as possible. I think that co-chairing countries should seriously think about what sanctions could be applied against the aggressor in order to make them leave the occupied lands.

- Do you think that the co-chairs managed to remain entirely neutral over the month of the military phase?

- Every country, including Azerbaijan, can have its own foreign political priorities. We have closer relations with some countries and less close with others. Our relations with some countries are based on historical factors and with others on pragmatic factors. That is why we have always treated with understanding the fact that there are very well structured and active Armenian communities in the co-chairing countries, in the US, in France, and in Russia. Even when we analyzed this situation, it is very hard to tell where they have greater influence on decision-making. That is why we have always taken and are taking this factor into account.

If there were some deviations at the first stage of hostilities that made us doubt their neutrality, I think now everything is fine-tuned. My contacts with the leaders of the co-chairing countries, as well as, I am sure, international support that Azerbaijan got, resulted in the fact that we can see this neutrality now. Once again, what some people have on their mind is not our business, but, of course, the mediators must adhere to international law and neutrality, otherwise they will just forfeit the right to be mediators. A mediator must be impartial, it must leave emotions at home or leave them for the bilateral format, and as part of the settlement it must take into account the mandate that the OSCE gave it and the desire to settle the conflict in line with international law rather than in line with the wishes of Azerbaijan or Armenia.

- You have said recently said that there will be no referendum in Nagorno-Karabakh. This is the new reality. Does this mean that Azerbaijan has changed its position, made it tougher?

- I have been talking about this for 17 years, and the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs know my position. I don't remember how many co-chairs have changed over these years, how many diplomats have been co-chairmen, but all of them can confirm that I have always said that there will never be a referendum on the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. Moreover, if we look at the fundamental principles, there is no such word as 'referendum' there. There is a certain wording related to the expression of will, to self-determination there.

We have always said that self-determination is an important principle of international law, but it cannot violate the territorial integrity of a country. Secondly, a country's territorial integrity cannot be changed without the consent of this country. And I naturally adhere to this position today: we will not let a second Armenian state be set up on Azerbaijan's territories. If someone is willing to create a second Armenian state, let them give a part of their territory and let them create it there.

- Armenia says that it can recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh if hostilities continue. At the same time, there are calls for countries and international organizations to recognize Karabakh. How likely is this? And what could it lead to?

- What you are asking about once again proves the inconsistency and insincerity of the incumbent Armenian authorities, because while failing to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh themselves, they want other countries do that. And their regular blackmailing and threats that they will recognize Nagorno-Karabakh in case of escalation turned out to be yet another bluff. Military confrontation on Karabakh has lasted for more than a month. Why haven't they recognized Nagorno-Karabakh yet?

It is very easy to do, let them just say that they recognize it. This is the essence of their policies, when they have been always trying for many decades, but regrettably they have sometimes succeeded under the cover of other states to have other states solve their problems. This is the essence of the ideology of the present-day Armenian state. It is based on very deep historical roots, it has been this way for the whole history. If we look at the past 200 years of the history of the Caucasus, we can see how many wars started because of them, how many provocations they caused for other countries, and then going to the backstage, hiding behind someone's backs reaped the fruits of confrontation and the fruits of shedding the blood of other peoples.

We know the history of their appearance in the Caucasus well. Historically, there was no Armenian ethnicity in the region. How did they get here? This was their way, trickery, cunning attempts to use a cat's paw to take roasting chestnuts from a fire. They are doing the same now. Hence my call for them in response – recognize Nagorno-Karabakh, recognize its right today. By the way, I have spoken about it quite recently. Let them recognize Nagorno-Karabakh today, but asking other countries to do this once again proves the inappropriateness of the Armenian leadership and very low political literacy. That is why if the Armenian leadership knew at least the basics of international politics a little, it would understand that the whole world recognizes Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. It is common knowledge that we joined the UN and other international organizations as a single state encompassing Nagorno-Karabakh. The Non-Aligned Movement – 120 countries – voices unambiguous support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. The

European Union – 27 countries – our document with the EU states the support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of Azerbaijan's borders. Altogether there are almost 150 countries. Should we add the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which, however, includes some NAM members but there are other countries that are not represented in the NAM, we get the whole international community.

Because of Armenia, its whim and caprice to recognize Nagorno- Karabakh, to spoil relations with Azerbaijan, and not just to spoil, as I said this will immediately lead to the rupture of diplomatic relations with any country that will do so, no- one will just do that. Moreover, they don't recognize it themselves. Moreover, they are aggressors in line with the reality on the Earth and in line with UN resolutions. This is why this is a very indecent attempt to pull somebody's chestnuts out of the fire.

- Russia has proposed deploying military observers in the conflict zone. Prime Minister Pashinyan in general agreed to deploying peacekeepers to the conflict zone and didn't rule out that these could be Russian peacekeepers. So is it observers or peacekeepers? What is the position of Baku?

- This issue is reflected in the fundamental principles, but we have never seriously discussed it because we simply didn't get to it. It was planned to dispatch peacekeepers to the region at the final stage of the settlement, when the aftermath of the occupation is mitigated, when refugees return to Nagorno-Karabakh, then, yes, in order to ensure that Azerbaijani and Armenian population can live side by side, disengagement forces will be needed at the first stage. But the fundamental principles don't state for how long they should be deployed and what countries they should consist of. Simply because we didn't reach it. First of all, all main provisions of the agreement must be agreed on.

As for the desire of the Armenian prime minister to see peacekeepers in the conflict zone, then firstly, this is none of his business, because when we speak about the conflict zone, we should understand that this is Azerbaijan's territory. If we speak about peacekeepers at the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan, this is another issue. But as far as I understand, it is the Azerbaijani territory that is in question now, that is why we should have the final say.

And since this topic wasn't broadly discussed, I think it is premature to speak about it. But for my part I would like to note that when we speak about it, we should firstly understand what mandate possible observers would have and where they would be deployed. One should understand that there is no contact line, so where will their posts be? Armenia breaches international law and ceasefire, shelling our cities. Just recently, Euronews aired footage that clearly shows a flying missile flying. And it was flying to our cities rather than military positions. So where they will be, what mandate, composition, numbers, arms, and functions will they have, and who will ensure their security? These questions require very thorough examination, and only afterwards will we be able to say whether we agree to it or not. That is why it is so far premature.

- In general, do military officials of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia discuss any mechanisms of ceasefire monitoring?

- No, there are no such discussions now.

- Are you ready to go to Moscow for negotiations on Karabakh with the Armenian prime minister? And on what conditions?

- I haven't received such an invitation. I have repeatedly taken part in trilateral meetings between the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, but there have been no such meetings since Pashinyan came to power in Armenia. These meetings were with the previous presidents of Armenia, and I have never avoided such meetings. I considered them to be very positive, because Russia as a co- chair of the Minsk Group plays a special role in the settlement, and historically Russia has always maintained close ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russia is very actively cooperating politically and economically with Azerbaijan and Armenia these days, it is our neighbor. Therefore, it is natural that most of these meetings have been held in Russian territory, but there have been no such meetings with Pashinyan. I don't know how efficient they are going to be now with regard to the Armenian leadership. But if such a proposal is made, we have always viewed them positively and will continue to do so.

- Does this mean that you are ready to go if there is such an invitation?

- Yes, and without any preconditions as you have said. This is evident from the fact that our foreign ministers will be meeting in Geneva tomorrow also without any preconditions. Moreover, I would like to say that, when the conflict only just began, our foreign minister had plans to visit Geneva to meet with the co-chairs, and he did go there. And the Armenian foreign minister, who had planned to travel there a week

before, in early October, refused to go. And when a proposal from Moscow came on a meeting between the foreign ministers to coordinate a humanitarian ceasefire, our foreign minister flew there from Geneva. In other words, we are not setting any terms, but again, I really doubt that the current Armenian authorities are capable of constructively working toward a settlement.

- Prime Minister Pashinyan has repeatedly said that Turkish troops are directly involved in hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh. It was also said that Pakistani special units are also involved. Your comment?

- These are yet more of Pashinyan's lies. I must say that there were no such things in my contacts with previous Armenian presidents. Yes, we are adversaries, we cannot have positive attitudes towards each other, but there have never been such open lies and such allegations at the negotiating table. This is all lies. There are no Turkish special units there. I have repeatedly said that, and there is no such need. He has now said that some kind of Pakistani special units are present here, and by the way I think he got a note of protest in return. This is nonsense, there is no such thing.

These are all attempts to firstly engage other countries into the conflict, make it international in order to conceal his shameful defeat, saying that allegedly it is not Azerbaijan that beats us up on the battlefield, but Turkish and Pakistani special units. He has recently made a ridiculous statement – as I was told – that the terrorists Azerbaijan had allegedly brought from Syria to Azerbaijan sneaked into Russia and staged a terrorist attack in Grozny. Just understand that this is absolute nonsense. Russian special services know for sure who staged the terrorist attack. Previously, he said that Turkey's F- 16 brought down Armenia's Su-25. Everyone knows this is a lie. Such things are monitored by Russia and other co-chairing countries. We live in the era of technologies and nothing can be hidden.

This was simply idiocy when he said that it wasn't Armenia that had launched ballistic missiles against Ganja, because any launch of a ballistic missile is monitored. Russia, America and France are well aware that this missile was launched and what combat mission it had. The combat mission was to hit a residential neighborhood, and another residential neighborhood for the second time. We have no military bases, no military towns in Ganja. He is simply lying.

And he says it was not us, when hundreds of journalists take horrible footage of these destructions, when foreign diplomats give interviews right from the destruction site, Pashinyan says that it was not Armenia. Then who? Did we strike at Ganja ourselves? Just imagine the level of deceit and, what is more, idiocy. Any reasonable person should understand that this is impossible to hide. It is yet another lie when he speaks about Pakistani and Turkish special units. He will say tomorrow that Martians were brought there in order to liberate territories. Anything can be expected from him.

- I would still like to specify Turkey's future role in the conflict settlement...

- We see Turkey's role in the settlement as effective. Turkey is a fraternal state to us. Turkey is the only country of the world that borders on three South Caucasian countries. Turkey today has a decisive say in many discussions not only on a regional but also on a global scale. Turkey pursues an absolutely independent foreign policy, thus evoking, as far as I know, much irritation among those who have got used to ordering everyone about. That is why I think Turkey, as a secure partner and friend of Azerbaijan, which has also have very close relations with Russia, will definitely play an important role.

It is already playing this role, and the fact that the presidents of Russia and Turkey, the foreign ministers, and the defense ministers are in constant contact with each other discussing these questions proves that Turkey is already engaged, whether Armenia likes it or not. But I am certain that Armenia is forced to recognize and accept this.

- Is there a risk that the Azerbaijani- Armenian conflict will escalate into a regional confrontation involving big states?

- Frankly speaking, I cannot fully rule this out, but I must say that for our part we will take no actions that could lead to this, there will be no provocations that would make this conflict international. We don't need this, and I have said many times over the past month that we are against this, and I called on countries to show restraint and not to interfere. I am glad this is happening this way.

Although Armenia's constant attempts to make this conflict international and constant requests of the Armenian leadership for Russia to almost send its troops to fight on Armenia's side are exactly what I was talking about - to pull somebody's chestnuts out of the fire. That is why I am sure that regional countries, and these are the countries that Azerbaijan enjoys close historical, cultural, political and trustworthy

relations with – Russia, Turkey, Iran, Georgia – will naturally abstain from any actions that would play into the aggressor's hands.

- Not long ago President Putin said that the death toll of the current escalation on both side is about 5,000 people. Do you have the same data?

- I said that we would publish the number of killed servicemen after the war is over. As for civilians, we are making data public. I told you about 69 people killed and more than 300 wounded.

As for the losses, I can say what losses Armenia could have according to our estimates. Just look, simple arithmetic, 256 tanks were destroyed as of yesterday, the figure is growing day to day, just multiply it by – how many crewmembers there are, three or four – this is almost 1,000. Next, over 50 infantry fighting vehicles were destroyed, it is roughly clear how many people are there. Hundreds of artillery guns, and each of them has several people, six S-300 systems, about 40 OSA air defense systems, the TOR, KUB, KRUG systems, more than 400 trucks – and the majority of them carried personnel and ammunition when they were destroyed. If we just calculate these figures... And how many people were killed in trenches? We were in those trenches, the contact lines – the footage is on the Internet. So according to our information, 5,000 Armenian troops may have been killed, and the number of wounded during war, as a rule, is two to three times higher.

As for our losses, I have said we will make them public after the fighting is over. But I have to say that they are a lot less, and bearing in mind the nature of the combat clashes, the difficult terrain, and the fortifications that the Armenians have built for 30 years, I believe that every human life is priceless, but our losses are minimal, bearing in mind all these factors.

- Military experts believe that Azerbaijan managed to minimize its losses during the active stage of hostilities thanks to the active use of drones. What is the reason for using drones?

- Of course, the arsenal of the Azerbaijani army consists not only of drones. We have modern air defense systems made in Russia, in Israel, in Belarus; several air defense systems are crisscross, which shoot down the bulk of missiles being sent from Armenian territory. Unfortunately, we can't shoot down all of them.

Our armor is the most modern: upgraded T-72 tanks, the most modern T-90 tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, modern artillery that has a very long range. This includes Polonez rockets, LORA, Extra, Kasirga, etc. Our approach to the arming of our army was not one-sided.

But modern methods of warfare, of course, are different from those we had back in 1990s, and so unmanned aviation is an important factor of our combat capabilities, especially considering such fortified areas. That is why even the footage that we show on the Internet, just believe me that it is almost nothing compared to what is happening. This is what we can show.

They dug everything they could there. They have many kilometers of interconnected tunnels, rat holes where they get to as soon as they hear noise. There is a rat hole near every gun. That is why it would have been very hard to destroy this without modern hardware, this would result in a large number of casualties. We destroyed many Grad systems, and in this case unmanned aviation, Turkish and Israeli drones, helped us very much.

By using UAVs, we destroyed at least six S-300 air defense systems. In addition, modern UAVs conduct reconnaissance themselves, apart from independently carrying out strikes. They also coordinate artillery, which strikes afterwards. This is why it is an important factor of our success. But as I said, Azerbaijani soldiers and officers are liberating the lands, raising the flag. Because this is our heritage, and it is not by accident that the Azerbaijani army is considered as one of the most effective. I already know that this experience has been studied. In general, this experience will be useful for many countries in order to plan future military build-up.

And even for us. I recently held a meeting with the military and said that we should analyze both successes and shortcomings. And in the future, when we buy military hardware, we should be guided by experience in terms of what we need and what lies idle in storage depots.

- You spoke about Azerbaijan's civilian losses. What is the reaction of the international community to this? Does it condemn it or does everything end with calls to Baku and Yerevan to stop shelling each other?

- Yes, this is so. And this is not news for us. What kind of condemnation of Armenia has there been over these years of occupation? Has it been condemned? There has been none. Has anyone condemned Armenia for occupation? Yes, UN Security Council resolutions were adopted in 1993, yes, we then attained

the adoption of UN General Assembly, the Non-Aligned Movement and even the European Parliament resolutions. Of course, they created a judicial framework, a legal framework for the settlement. But we have heard no condemnation. Even when it was clear that Armenia breached the ceasefire, not a single day elapsed after the ceasefire was agreed on in Moscow when they attacked Ganja.

And now, a day after the ceasefire was agreed on in Washington – and they begged for one, they begged for a ceasefire in Moscow and now, and what was reached thanks to the efforts of the French side – not a single day passed before they shelled Barda. And before that they fired at a funeral procession in Tartar. Four people were killed there. These are inhumane actions. This proves who we have to war against. This means there are no moral norms, no honor, dignity, and no understanding of how wars are fought.

You know, everyone, even an adversary, even an enemy, should be respected to a certain extent, because there are rules, in particular for fighting wars. There is nothing of the kind for the Armenian side. That is why we didn't pin much hope on condemnation. Fraternal Turkey backs us, Pakistan openly supports us. The Turkish president, the Pakistani prime minister have repeatedly voiced their support for us. Many countries support us. And when we say international community, almost every time the Western world is meant. But we haven't expected any sympathy from there.

- Could attacks on Azerbaijan's energy infrastructure, in particular Mingachevir and oil and gas pipelines, create certain risks for supplies of Azerbaijan's oil and gas to the global market?

- If they do what they promised, that is, the bombardment of the Sangachal terminal, or our oil and gas pipelines, this will certainly pose some risks. I think that they will be condemned in this case. As it is European consumers who need this oil and gas most of all. It is no secret that the gas pipeline from Azerbaijan to a certain extent, certainly not to a large extent, but somehow contributes and will contribute to energy security of some European countries.

As for the oil supplies, some European Union countries get 40 to 50 percent of their oil from Azerbaijan today. If something happens to these oil and gas pipelines, Armenia will face already serious international pressure. However, this does not stop them. They attempted to bomb the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline. This is a pipeline that connects Azerbaijan and Russia, a country Armenia constantly demands special relations from without giving anything in return. Absolutely nothing in both the political sense and international support. It is hard to expect anything different from the Soros team.

That is why the bombardment of the electric power plant in Mingachevir is aimed at destroying Azerbaijan's energy system. This, of course, will have an effect to a certain extent, but we have already set up a branched power supply network, and new electric power plants.

This proves the predatory nature of the Armenian side. It is another thing that we have destroyed the majority of these missiles in mid-air, intercepted them, and some of them did not explode. This also speaks about their military potential. But such a threat certainly does exist, and we should respond to it adequately.

I have always said and continue saying that despite the barbaric bombardment of Barda, where a seven-year-old girl was killed and several more children were injured, I say that we are not them. We will respond on the battlefield, we will respond by liberating new lands, by raising the flag in new cities. We will bomb neither cities nor civilians.

Let me give you an absolutely recent example. It is an exchange of dead bodies and prisoners in question. Basically, this subject was first mentioned for humanitarian reasons in Moscow on 10 October. We contacted the Red Cross to say, 'Let's organize a swap.' Moreover, I will give you further detail. I have ordered to maximally preserve the bodies of Armenian servicemen – in refrigerators or cold places. We all understand what happens to human bodies...

- They are decaying...

- Yes, absolutely right. And the Armenian side refuses to take them every time. It says every time, let's do it where battles are under way. So, you understand, to put the lives of civilians in jeopardy. We say no. We have a state border. Let's do it in Tovuz district, in Gazakh district. Let's do it there. So yesterday, I decided to unilaterally hand over the bulk of the bodies of the killed Armenian servicemen. Plus, we have two civilians. These are elderly people who we are also handing over. And so we tried to do it yesterday. We sent cars with the bodies toward the border. We involved the office of the OSCE and the Red Cross. But the Armenian side doesn't accept them. You see, it doesn't take the dead! What are we talking about? How can this even be commented on? What norms of human moral does this fit into? That is why we will transfer the bodies in any case. Currently, we are looking at transferring their civilians and killed people via Georgia.

But if they refuse to accept them, I just don't know what to do. This is who we are fighting with, you see. Everyone should understand this. These are all their false and whining assurances. Their cries, their moans, these are just crocodile tears. We know this well. That is why the Russian public shouldn't be deceived by these lies and slander. Yes, it is clear that they got incorporated deep into Russia's agencies. But that is not all. They are also there in France and America. They are in the media, they sometimes create a public background. But people should understand who we are fighting against and understand that we are right. We are fighting on our own land, and they are dying on our land.

- You have repeatedly said that the military phase of the conflict will end sooner or later. If Karabakh and seven districts are returned, how could this affect the pace of Azerbaijan's economic development?

- It is hard to say. You know, there are different assessments. Of course, the return of large territories under our control is a big potential for growth and development, primarily in agriculture and tourism spheres. Because the Karabakh region is one of the most beautiful and bountiful regions of our country. It is rich in natural resources – gold, zinc, lead. By the way, Armenia illegally produces gold in Kalbajar together with some foreign companies. But we, of course, will hold all of them to account through relevant legal procedures.

That is why prospects of this region will be very important for the sustainable development of Azerbaijan and for ensuring food security, primarily. But one should understand that this will entail enormous financial expenditures at the initial stage.

- Restoration...

- Yes, of course. The footage that we demonstrate show that there is no house left there. When we liberated Fuzuli, we were unable to find a single building intact - just imagine. In the whole city. And tens of thousands people lived there. No building. I was called, and I said raise the flag on a flagpole. Do you understand? This is what they did. And look at the ruins of Aghdam, Jabrayil district. Everything is in ruins. It looked as if barbarians were there, not people. They took everything away, roofs, windows, toilets, sinks. They are just thieves. That is why we will face enormous expenditures. Infrastructure, roads, communications, housing, administrative buildings. Let me put it this way, at the first stage from the point of view of the gross domestic product this will probably have a positive impact on the construction industry, employment, and everything related to the production of construction materials. But from the point of view of expenditures, these will run to many billions.

We will calculate the damage. I have already ordered, given instructions to set up temporary command offices in liberated territories. I issued this order just a few days ago. We will take stock of everything that is left there, we will assess the damage inflicted there. Naturally, later, at the stage when our people will return there, we will employ relevant legal procedures and hold the aggressor accountable.

So I think in the long run, I think, in five or ten years this will add a good impetus to the non-oil industries, while this will be very costly in the short run. But there are no material dimensions that would stop us from restoring Karabakh and make it one of the most beautiful and comfortable place for living on earth.

- And my last question. What is your vision of the geopolitical development of the situation and alignment of forces in the region after the Karabakh conflict is settled?

- I believe the situation will certainly be different from what it used to be before the conflict. We have changed the geopolitical lie of the land in the region in many respects. It has already been changed, and a lot of stereotypes have become outdated - for instance, such a stereotype as confrontation between Russia and NATO. Now look: Russia and Turkey, a NATO member, have far more sincere and trusting relations than Turkey, a NATO member, has with some other country. It didn't use to be this way. This is a new reality. That is why this very structured stereotypical geopolitical thinking is being consigned to history. I think this is a positive factor. So we have to proceed from the reality. And politicians shape the reality by their actions. I think our region today sees a very positive format of cooperation between leading policy-makers, who determine the region's agenda and are focused on cooperation.

After all, we can talk about active cooperation between Turkey, Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan in both trilateral and bilateral formats these days. I think one day we will start working in a quadrilateral format as well. This would be natural from the historical, economic, transport and geopolitical standpoints, and what is most important, from the standpoint of strengthening security in this region.

That is why Armenia should not remain foreign matter on the body of the Caucasus. It was the last to come here, and the Armenian state was created artificially on the lands that it never owned. I have said many times that the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic gave Yerevan to Armenia. This is a historical fact. On 29 May 1918, a day after the foundation of the republic was announced, Yerevan was given to Armenia. When this issue was being discussed, members of the legislative body from Yerevan were against it, but their opinion was ignored. So this is how Yerevan was given away, as simply as that. But, as they say, what is to be, will be.

Armenia shouldn't be a foreign body. It must end the occupation and normalize relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey. This would only benefit them, believe me, this would only benefit them. All communications would be opened, and they would become part of energy and transport integration projects, they would become part of the common security system. After all, look, Turkey is buying S-400 systems from Russia. This is an absolutely new security system. This is not just the purchase of an air defense system, but this is a step toward a new security system and mutual confidence. This can't be accomplished without mutual confidence. We bought S-300 from Russia a long time ago, this is also a factor of mutual confidence, you see.

Therefore, this arrangement in the region benefits all. Armenia should come to understand that it is being marginalized, and nobody will fight for it. And what's next? If it continues confrontation with us, if it keeps making territorial claims on Turkey, well, it should understand, how can it oppose us? But we don't want this opposition. We want peace, despite all the pain and tragedies that they have inflicted on our people. Therefore, I believe that geopolitical realities should be developing positively. At least as far as we are concerned, we will be doing all we can to make this happen.

- Thank you for your detailed answers.

-Thank you

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by German ARD TV channel

31.10.2020 [20:20]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been interviewed by German ARD TV channel.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

-On the 27th of September, the war started. What is your answer to the question ‘who shot first?’

-The answer is Armenia and we have evidences, because the first victims among civilians and military personnel were Azerbaijanis. That was a third in a row military provocation against us. The first was in July, when they launched an attack on the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. And we had casualties among the civilians and the military personnel. The second attempt was in August when Armenia sent a sabotage group, whose leader was detained and he gave evidence that he was sent in order to attack the civilians. And the third time on the 27th of September they launched a heavy artillery bombardment on some of the villages and cities situated close to the line of contact. We responded. So that's how it started.

-You responded tough and harsh. Why like this, this time? Is it a pre-dominance of the Azerbaijan military, because of the drones from Israel and Turkey?

-We had these drones from Israel already for many years and by the way, some of them were used in 2016 during Armenian another provocation which launched in the liberation of the part of the occupied territories. But that clash lasted for several days because Armenia stopped. And if they stopped this time, we would have stopped also. But they did not. They wanted to make a big damage. They started to shell the cities which situated far beyond the line of contact. And we had many victims among civilians so far-69. So we had to defend ourselves, defend our people and to respond. So our response was harsh, but they deserved it.

-As far as I understand, you gained some grounds in the south especially, but as well, I mean next to Karabakh, further in the north and how long will this war continue?

-It depends on Armenia, I said many times. We are ready to stop today. And by the way, the fact that three times we agreed for ceasefire demonstrates our will to stop military confrontation and to resolve this issue on the negotiation table by political purposes, political means. But 3 times Armenia brutally violated the ceasefire.

-But they say the same.

-But look yes, definitely they do. But look at what happened. On the 10th of October, the humanitarian ceasefire was announced. The next day they launched a ballistic missile attack on Ganja from the territory of Armenia. Probably you have seen the devastation which it caused. Ten people were killed, civilians. They said it was not them. But it is clear, because the launch of the ballistic missiles is observed by the satellite. So, the three co-chair countries of the Minsk Group definitely know who did it. The second time they did the same, they violated the ceasefire two minutes after it was announced. And the third time yesterday when they launched a cluster bomb on the city of Tartar. Four people were killed among them one seven year old girl. So it was them. There was no evidence that we did it. What we do is opposite. I said that we will not respond them the same way. We will respond them on the battlefield. We do not attack cities, we do not attack civilians, only on the battlefield. But we have to defend ourselves. If they attack, if they want to regain the positions which they lost, we cannot just stay calm. We need to defend and the more we defend the more territories we liberate.

-But exactly the same thing they claimed as well. They say that you use cluster bombs and I mean there was even like some proves from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that you used cluster bombs there in Karabakh. I mean, why do you use this kind of arms?

-We don't use. We defend ourselves. We invited Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to come to Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, their coverage of the events is only from Armenian side. They did not approach us to come here, therefore, we have big doubts about their impartiality.

-But now they come. As far as I understand, Human Rights Watch, they are coming or they told me.

-They are coming, because we said "why don't you come here?" After we made a request to them. "Please, do come here", they agreed to come. But why didn't they come in the first place?

-They told me that they wanted to come. They asked for several times, but you didn't give them access.

-No, no. That is not possible. Because that was what we did. Just yesterday we said, why they don't come, let them come and go to Ganja, go to Tartar, meet the people whom Armenians attacked. And again, the ballistic missile launch is seen from the satellite. No one can say that we launched a ballistic missile on any civilian compound in Nagorno-Karabakh or in Armenia.

-Let me ask you again about this cluster munition. Because, of course, you know it's very serious subject. I had a look into the research of Human Rights Watch and the proof was quite interesting, they had pictures, and they even have names. The name of the weapon they said LAR 160 cluster bomb from Israel. Do you really want to dispute that fact?

-Yes, of course. There are no proofs about that. And I would like them to come here, and to give these proofs. At the same time, to go to Ganja, to go to Tartar, to go to Barda and see what kind of weapons Armenians are using. And be impartial...

-So, if they can find weapons here, you rely on their research.

-No, they will have to, because there is no way for them to say "no". Let them say, because so far, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International was very aggressive against Azerbaijan. They never made any comment about violation of human rights in Armenia. When a journalist died in Armenian prison they were silent. When leader of main opposition party of Armenia was jailed, they were silent. When former presidents are on trial, they were silent. They don't want to see it, because they have the so-called Armenian origin people in their structures. And these organizations are basically used in order to damage the image of Azerbaijan. But nevertheless, we invited them. Let them come. And say what they see.

-Actually, you never signed the UN Convention on cluster munition. So, why is it a problem for you? Actually you could use it.

-But did Armenia sign?

-We are talking about Azerbaijan and not Armenia.

-We are talking about the conflict. We are talking about the conflict and the fact that we sign or don't sign any kind of convention doesn't mean that we are using it or not. We have enough ammunition. We have modern weapons and we demonstrate it on the battlefield. And what we do, we liberate the territories not with bombs. We liberate the territories with our fighters which take one village after another, one city after another, raise the Azerbaijani flag. So, that's how it is done.

-Coming to this subject, I mean, wouldn't it be a goal somehow to take over those seven districts and afterwards to negotiate and maybe to come into autonomous zone of Karabakh?

-We suggested that but Armenians always rejected. The co-chairs of the Minsk Group can prove what I say. We always suggested, we always were committed to the peace plan, so-called basic principles which provided the liberation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in phases. At the first stage five, at the second stage two. But now among those five, almost all of them have already been liberated. Therefore, Armenia was always against that. And frankly speaking, what we have seen on the battlefield after we liberated the territories. Those engineering constructions which were built there- they invested maybe hundreds of millions of dollars. They show that they were not planning to leave those territories. Because if they planned to leave the territories, they would not have invested so much. There were several lines of defense with the modern equipment, modern weapons, and modern engineering technology. Therefore, all their behavior on negotiation table was an attempt to mislead the mediators and us. They were making the negotiations endless and wanted to win time what they have managed to do for 27 years. Therefore, we committed to the basic principles. Seven districts must be returned to us. Armenians have never lived in those districts. Plus, Azerbaijanis who were expelled from Nagorno-Karabakh-there have been 40 thousand people of Azerbaijani origin in Nagorno-Karabakh before-must return there. Then, that's how the plan should be implemented.

-An autonomous region without any Azerbaijani influence?

-That was part of the discussions. But we did not come to a final agreement about that.

-But would you agree about that?

-Well, we need to discuss it now. Because now there are new realities on the ground. Always we heard...

-What kind of influence do you want to have there-in an autonomous region? I mean is this contradicting by itself?

-No. First of all, we did not agree on any autonomous region. This is first. We did not come to this agreement. When we were suggesting that, Armenians were rejecting. They were demanding independence, which we did not agree. Now the realities on the ground have changed. We heard many times that there are realities and you have to take them into account. It is okay. So, we changed the realities. **Now they will have to take it** into account, and what we suggested them during these 27 years, maybe is not valid any longer. Therefore, we need to have discussions now and, by the way, we are ready to send our foreign minister to Geneva tomorrow to start a new round of negotiations if Armenia is ready, and to discuss the future of Nagorno-Karabakh at the negotiation table. But for that Armenia should stop. They always wanted during these months to regain back the territories which we liberated and that was a main reason for their defeat.

-When we were there in this area, among us the question came up. Why actually is Karabakh so important for Azerbaijan? I mean, is there a kind of resource or is it just symbolic?

-Alsace and Lorraine, is it important for you? Bavaria, is it important for you? Or Rhine-Westphalia? It is our land, our territory, internationally recognized. It is not a matter of resources. We have main resources here in Baku. It is a matter of justice, it is a matter of national pride and it is a matter of international law. International law and the whole international community recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan. And we are restoring justice and we are implementing the UN Security Council resolutions which were on paper for 27 years.

-Are you actually recognizing that the majority of the people in these region were Armenians as most historians say worldwide?

-With respect to the history, I can tell you that Armenians were transported or brought to this region after the peace agreement between the Karabakh khanate and Russian empire was signed by Ibrahim Khalil Khan and Russian general Tsitsianov in the beginning of the 19th century.

-Aren't they living there for centuries?

-No, no, no. They started to be transported to Nagorno-Karabakh after Kurakchay peace agreement and then Gulustan peace agreement, Turkmenchay peace agreement- in 1805, 1813, 1828. You can see on internet. There is no mentioning of Armenians in this agreements. Armenians then were brought by Tsarist Russia from eastern Anatolia and from Persia in order to change the ethnic and religious composition of the region.

-So, most of the historians, experts on the Caucasus region are wrong?

-Yes, of course. Because look at the documents. Historians, which historians? There are different historians and history sometimes is motivated by political preferences. But look at those documents. They are on internet and you can see. If you find any mentioning of Armenian population you will say that I am wrong. So, that's how it was. But the other thing is yes, they lived there for 200 years, and the word Karabakh is an Azerbaijani word, it is not an Armenian word. Do you know how they call the so-called capital of Nagorno-Karabakh? Stepanakert. Do you know whose honor is it called? Stepan Shaumyan. Stepan Shaumyan was an Armenian-Russian Bolshevik, head of the criminal gang here which committed a genocide against the Azerbaijanis in 1918. So, if it was an ancient Armenian territory, why is it named Karabakh? And why the capital city is named Stepanakert and not some ancient name? Because they lived there for 200 years. In 1978, Armenians who lived there, raised a monument on the 150 years of their arrival to Nagorno-Karabakh. This is a history, but again, they have lived there for 200 years and we want them to live. I said many times, we want Azerbaijanis to go back and Armenians live there, where they lived historically for 200 years. No matter.

-Nevertheless, this people experience your military action as how they say ethnical cleansing.

-No, no, not at all. We were the subject of ethnic cleansing. When they occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and seven districts surrounding it, we had 750 thousand Azerbaijanis ethnically cleansed from 7 districts plus from Shusha which was a part of Nagorno-Karabakh. We've been subject of ethnic cleansing. We didn't do any ethnic cleansing against Armenians and we are not planning to do it now. Because I said that we will have to live together. It will not be easy but we will have to learn.

-But civilians were killed there right now, the last couples of weeks.

-Civilians were killed in Azerbaijan also-69

-There as well.

-Yes. Because it's a war. But 69 civilians killed in the territories which are far away from the conflict zone, in Ganja, more than 300 civilians have been wounded by Armenians. It's a war. It happens. Unfortunately.

-I used to live in Israel for five years. I know very well that the drones in Israel are very accurate. So, it wasn't done by a drone as far as I understand, how does that come that the church was hit in Karabakh?

-That was as I said already, probably a mistake of our artillery or the second option could be that Armenians did it themselves. In order to put a blame on us.

-Christians are shooting on their churches?

-But it was a minor damage. It was not destroyed. Have you seen the images of that? It's a minor damage. The church was not destroyed. It can be repaired within two weeks maximum. Therefore, we have a doubt that could be done by them, themselves, in order to put a blame on us. Look at the Armenian church in Baku. We preserve it. We restored it.

-Could you imagine Muslims to destroy, or to demoralize mosque by themselves to make something up like this?

-I don't know. Maybe. Maybe it may happen. Why not? Armenian church here in Baku is preserved by us. We did not destroy it. We protect it. We keep thousands of Armenian books there. But in the mosque in Zangilan which was liberated, they kept pigs there. That's the difference.

-As far as I understand, on the 1st of October, a man in Azerbaijan was put in prison because he demanded peace. I mean some human rights experts, defenders say you might have started this war as well to unite the nation behind you to somehow to distract from the problems in the country when it comes to democracy and human rights.

-That is absolutely wrong assessment. First of all, I don't know about anyone who was arrested. If you can give me the name, if you have the name give me. Do you have the name?

-I don't have the name right now but I will find out.

-When you find out, tell me. So, we can consider this question invalid, because you don't have the name and I don't have this information. With respect to distraction of attention there is no need to distract the attention. Our political system is efficient. Before this clash, and even before the parliamentary elections which we had, I launched a kind of a new process of political cooperation. We made a public appeal to all political parties to start practical cooperation, to put an end to hostility, and to start at least talking to each other. Except two parties, all the other parties, 50 of them supported it. We started a modern new political process. We have now many opposition members in our parliament. The political process is very efficient.

-Aren't there many opposition members either in prison in Azerbaijan?

-No, no. Those who are in prison, they are in prison for the crimes they have committed. There are no one here on political charges and opposition is...

-What kind of crimes? Saying their opinion?

-No, no, different crimes as any other crimes. I don't know exactly which but it is just ordinary crimes. So, we don't have this kind of reason. Second, our economic performance during the pandemic is one of the best. Our economy declined only 3.9 percent, it is much lower than in some European countries. Poverty level in Azerbaijan is 5 percent, much lower. Unemployment level is 7 percent, much lower. We have hot currency reserves which exceed our foreign debt six times. So, I don't have internal problems, why should I launch it?

-Would you call Azerbaijan an example for democracy?

--No, no, never. Would you call your country an example for democracy?

-Somehow yes.

-But you ban opposition rallies.

-No, actually not.

-Yes, yes. Those extremists who wanted to have a rally, I forgot the name. You banned them.

-I don't know about that. I mean even during those corona times they were doing demonstrations.

-No. it was before corona times. We are not, and we do not pretend to be. But there are countries which pretend to be, but they killed protesters. Do you know how many people were killed during these yellow-vest protests? Do you know? More than ten killed.

-But we are not talking about France.

-No, no, let's talk about Europe.

-About Azerbaijan...

-No, let's talk about those who pretend to be democrats. We are not pretending. Yes, we have shortcomings.

-I will ask Mr. Macron about this.

-But those who kill protesters, who kill protestors on the street, ten of them killed. We look how in Europe you beat protesters, you beat them by forces. You bring dogs and this is considered democracy.

-How important is the country-where we came from right now-Turkey for you and especially during this military operation during this war? I mean there are Turkish soldiers here. Yesterday, we talked to some of them and they told us they are from Turkey.

-You talked to soldiers?

-Yes.

-On the battlefield?

-No, no, not on the battlefield

-But where?

-In the city of Baku.

-They are fighting here, in Baku?

-No, they are here. Nevertheless, they are here.

-There can be German soldiers here now.

-You are doing military exercises together.

-Yes, we do.

-If, a third country would get involved into this conflict, do you expect the help from Turkey?

-We do not expect any third country to be involved. We do not see which country can be involved, because the countries which surround us are our partners and friends. We know that Armenians want to involve some of them into this battle. But I am sure it will not happen. It's a battle between us and Armenia. And everybody should stay away from that. Turkish soldiers can be here, yes. Last year we had ten joint military trainings. But also, we have military trainings with other countries. We are part of the NATO partnership peace program. Nothing strange. You saw them in Baku, you didn't see them in the battle.

-Do you feel safer with Turkish F-16s here in Azerbaijan?

-Turkish F-16s came here as a result of the military training and they stayed here because the Armenians launched an attack on us. And they are here as a sign of solidarity. They are not participating in any battle, and there are not a plan to be part of that.

-3 times ceasefires were broken. One negotiated by France, one negotiated by Russia one negotiated by the USA. Which international power could stop this war?

-I think, Armenia should stop it. International power-these 3 countries which you mentioned are co-chairs of the Minsk Group. They are leading countries of the world, members of the UN Security Council, permanent members. These countries adopted four resolutions demanding withdrawal of Armenian troops. But these countries did not do anything in order to implement these resolutions. These resolutions were on paper. That shows that this mediation was not efficient. But at the same time, we cannot think about some other countries which can be more powerful. Therefore, the only way to stop war is for Armenia to stop, to admit its defeat, to admit our victory and then to commit to liberation of the part of the territories. We will liberate them anyway. They did not believe when we started counter-attack. We said we will liberate, stop it now. They could have stopped even when we took Fuzuli back.

-Do you have the feeling that they are not very interested in this conflict?

-Whom do you mean?

-Those three countries for example?

-Well, no, I don't have this feeling, because if they were not interested, they wouldn't have been mediators. They have a mandate from the OSCE.

-But the mediation wasn't successful.

-Yes it wasn't successful. Because they did not put sanctions on Armenia. I raised it many times. Armenia should have been sanctioned like Iraq was sanctioned when Saddam Hussein occupied Kuwait, immediately. And there were serious sanctions against Iraq. If the same happened to Armenia, then they would have moved the forces back.

-So they closed their eyes?

-Yes, they closed their eyes. They, I would say, not closed their eyes, they were always saying there is no military solution. They wanted that this situation continued more or less the same way. I think they were fine with the fact that the conflict seemed to be frozen. They thought that it may be frozen forever, and they only tried to think about some confidence-building measures, some monitors, so that there's no outbreak. But they did not implement their mandate, in accordance with the OSCE decision and they should have forced Armenia. I think each of these countries unilaterally can send such a message to Armenia that it should listen to it, but they did not.

-Are you listening to them?

-I am listening to every partner. But it depends what I do after I listen. But I am listening.

-Two days ago, I heard you in the radio asking the question where has Armenia the money from to do this war? What is the answer?

-No answer. I've been asking this question for a month. We made a preliminary calculations.

-I mean, somebody asking this question continuously somehow has an answer in mind.

-Well, if I had an answer I would not have asked. If I am still asking, it means that I did not get an answer. We made a preliminary calculation about minimum, by the way, I did not disclose all of what we have destroyed. That will come. 2.7 billion dollars, cost of the ammunition which we destroyed and which we took as a trophy. Where the money comes from? Armenia is a poor country, its budget is less than 2 billion dollars. Its foreign debt is 8 billion dollars.

-They are supported by Russia.

-That's your opinion.

-This is official. This is no secret. Somebody else?

-Maybe, I don't know. So, I am asking but nobody is responding. So I will continue to ask.

-Your Excellency, Mr. President, thank you very much for the interview.

-Thank you.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Italian La Repubblica newspaper

04.11.2020 [10:36]

On November 2, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by the Italian La Repubblica newspaper.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

-Mr. President, are you already tasting the flavor of the victory?

-Our task was to restore territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and we are coming closer to this task. We have been waiting for restoration of the territorial integrity for almost 30 years. As you know, during all this time Azerbaijan was strictly committed to negotiation process. But unfortunately, it did not result in any tangible outcome. Plus, Armenian leadership during last couple of years was always provoking us by the statements, and by actions, including military provocations. So the last one took place on the 27th of September. We had to respond and our response was very sensitive to Armenia. So, when we talk about the victory we did not put in front of us such a target. We wanted to resolve it at the negotiation table. But we were always ready to do it on the battlefield what we are doing.

-Putin is not willing to intervene. So, you can act without obstacles.

-Actually, I on many occasions commented the situation that co-chairs of the Minsk Group, 3 countries which are at the same time permanent members of the Security Council of United Nations, adopted resolutions back in 1993 which demanded immediate and complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from the Azerbaijani territories. Therefore, these countries themselves created the legal base for the settlement. But Armenia did not implement these resolutions. Another point, which I was referring to is that mediators must be neutral, no matter how they feel about situation. How close their relations are with us, or with Armenia, but if they are not neutral they cannot be mediators. Therefore, the neutrality now which we more or less see on the ground I think is the only way how the things can happen. Therefore, it was not a kind of a green light for us. We responded to Armenian attack on the 27th of September without any 100% understanding who will do what. We just did what we thought was right to defend our country, to defend our people, and to restore justice.

-How useful is the Ankara support to your action?

-It is very useful. This support came from the very beginning, from the early hours of the clashes which started on the 27th of September. President of Turkey made a very clear statement that Turkey stands side by side with Azerbaijan. That was a very important sign of political and moral support, and I many times referred to the fact that this is only political and moral support, but it was sufficient. Because such a strong country as Turkey when openly declares its position on this issue, it also sends the signal to the whole world, that Azerbaijan is doing the right thing. Azerbaijan is restoring its territorial integrity, Azerbaijan is fighting on its territory. We are not aggressors, we are not attacking other countries. Therefore, this political support which started in the early hours of the clashes and continues up to now is very important for the conflict resolution.

-What can you say about the jihadists' presence that president Macron, Russian foreign minister denounced that they are fighting against Armenia with your army. Is it true?

-On many occasions I already during this time, more than one month, referred to this issue and said that this is not true. This is not correct information. I don't know why this information was circulated, and still is circulated. First, we haven't been provided with any evidence, any proof about that. All were words, and those words were articulated in the early days of the conflict. And you referred to President Macron's statement about that. That was only in the first days of the conflict. Since that time, we didn't hear these kind of statements. So this is first. No proofs no evidence. Second, no need. Many times I said we have an army of a 100 thousand fighters, a regular army. We can mobilize several times more if we announce the total mobilization. We have modern weapons. We have a sophisticated technology. And we have a very high moral spirit. Therefore, there is no need for that. But unfortunately, what happens on the other side is being ignored. We already have enough evidences about foreigners fighting on Armenian side. They say they are native Armenians but first, it does not make any difference, because if foreign citizen is fighting against one country against another, it is a mercenary. Then, we do not have a 100% evidence that all of them are Armenians. We know that there are others. We know that PKK is there, we know that some terrorists from the Middle East joined the so-called "army of Nagorno-Karabakh". Therefore, unfortunately,

this issue is absolutely out of picture. So, it creates an impression of a deliberate political attack on Azerbaijan. Plus, why Armenians are also exploiting this false statement, because for them probably it is very painful to admit that we beat them on the battlefield. For 30 years, they have been pretending that they have an unbeatable army. For 30 years they were telling that they on their own occupied our territories. Though, we know that it was wrong. So, we proved them who is who. We proved that their so-called “unbeatable army” is a legend, is a mythology. And for them to admit it is very painful. But they have already admitted their defeat. Prime minister Pashinyan sent a letter to President Putin asking for a military help. This is an admitting of their military defeat and our victory.

-What will be the difficulty for you to manage a possible victory, in the territory which populated by 98% of Armenian people?

-This territory was populated with maybe higher now. It was higher. Because all Azerbaijanis have been expelled. They committed ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis. It's a statistics, soviet statistics, not our statistics. How many people of different nationalities lived in Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous district in the end of 1970s? Almost 25% of the population there were Azerbaijanis. 40 thousand people. Shusha was 98% percent inhabited by Azerbaijanis. Today, there is no one. In Khankandi, there have been many Azerbaijanis. In Hadrut district, in other districts. Khojaly, which they committed a genocide, was 100% Azerbaijanis. So, they have been all ethnically cleansed, killed, tortured and expelled. And unfortunately, no one, no one accused Armenia of that. We did not see any sanctions on Armenia. We did not see any serious information supporting us. So, that was done and they created reality on the ground. This is the first thing. Second thing, 200 years ago, there were no Armenians at all there. Because I many times referred to the treaties which Karabakh khan signed with Russian empire. That Kurakchay treaty of 1805, nothing is said about ethnic Armenians there.

Ethnic Armenians were brought to that region from eastern Anatolia and Persia, by Tsarist Russia in order to change religious and ethnic composition of the region. So, this is historical part. Now coming to your question. I many times said that all those who live in Nagorno-Karabakh will continue to live there in peace and dignity. Armenians are our citizens. There are thousands of Armenians who live in different parts of Azerbaijan, primarily in Baku, and those Armenians who live in Nagorno-Karabakh can be sure that their security will be provided, their financial situation will be much better. And they will live much better life than today under this suppression of the junta regime in Nagorno-Karabakh.

-Three ceasefires as already were broken. The peace talks seem not to get any result. Who is to blame for?

-Armenia. Look at their chronology. First, ceasefire was agreed in Moscow. In less than 24 hours they attacked Ganja with ballistic missiles from the territory of Armenia. It is proven. Russia, France and United States and many other countries can detect the launch of ballistic missiles. So, they know, it was launched from Armenia, and Pashinyan was lying when he said that it was not them. So, that was in less than 24 hours. They attacked at night, in a very mean way. They attacked deliberately the residential settlement. And as a result of two attacks almost 30 people, innocent people, including children were killed. The second ceasefire was violated by them after five minutes of the announcement of that. And the third ceasefire they violated attacking Barda. So, it was not us. What were we supposed to do? Sit and wait when they are killing us? Of course, we respond and will continue to do it. They needed ceasefire in order to continue their aggression, in order to try to regain and occupy again the territories which we have liberated. And also they wanted to create a chaos, panic in Azerbaijan by attacking civilians but they miscalculated the spirit of Azerbaijani people. Yes, we suffer from these mean attacks. We have 91 civilians so far killed, and more than 400 wounded. But this did not break our will, on the contrary, it makes us even stronger.

-What would you answer to premier Pashinyan that I met 3 weeks ago? He said that you're here for a new genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh.

-Absolutely false. All their history is false. There is no signs of that. You know, as I said, there are thousands of Armenians living in Azerbaijan. There are no Azerbaijanis living in Armenia or in Nagorno-Karabakh. 99% of Armenian population are ethnic Armenians. Can you find any other country in our region where such a full domination of one nationality? It is a mono-ethnic republic. Why? Because either they expel everybody, or other nationalities cannot live there. Azerbaijan is a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional country. Therefore, talking about the so-called genocide is absolutely unacceptable and this is another fake which they want to present as they always do. They always want to present themselves as the people who always suffering, always crying always needing help. And today look, he calls President Putin 5 times a

day. He calls President Macron maybe less, but still. He calls everyone. He calls European leaders. He asks for recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh not understanding that there is a unified position of European Union on territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Therefore, he tries to use every fake method in order to get some support. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong. And as I said, and I am responsible for what I am saying, those Armenians who live in Nagorno-Karabakh can be sure that their security will be provided.

-With Italy you have a special partnership, you are our first provider of oil and gas. Are you afraid that if the war get bloodier and bloodier that partnership could be affected or not?

-I don't think so. First, I think that the sooner the war stops the better. And we made such a suggestion. And our proposal was very constructive. I said many times during this more than one month, I can repeat once again. We are ready to stop today. If Armenian prime minister makes a commitment that they will liberate the remaining part of the territories. He has not made this commitment so far. When asked about compromises, he always talks about a self-determination. But self-determination is not the compromise they have to do. Their compromise must be liberation of all occupied territories with respect to the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions, and the basic principles. Because basic principles say that five regions and then two. So, five are already done by us unilaterally. Therefore, he must say that he will pull back the troops from remaining part of Aghdam and Kalbajar and Lachin districts. But he doesn't make this statement. So it shows that he doesn't want the war to stop. We are ready. This is first. Second, I don't think that it will create any complications with respect to our relations with our partners. With Italy we have a special relations. We have signed a document which is called a Strategic Partnership document. And just before the pandemic I paid an official visit to Italy which was very successful and with very big plans I returned back home. I am sure we will implement those plans though pandemic interfered a little bit. But it is mainly non-related to energy sector. On energy track, we did I think all what we planned today. I think Italy for us is a major trading partner, because of oil supplies. And also soon we will celebrate the inauguration of TAP. Thus, Southern Gas Corridor will be completed. Plus, many Italian companies work in Azerbaijan successfully for many years. We are planning to invite more Italian companies as contractors. By the way, they have completed such important projects as petrochemicals here and together with President Mattarella we have been at the opening ceremony. Therefore, I am sure that this conflict will influence our relations neither with Italy nor with any other country. So, I am sure about that.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by Spanish EFE news agency

05.11.2020 [14:05]

On November 4, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by the Spanish EFE news agency.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

-Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you very much for taking the time to answer our questions in your busy time.

-Thank you for this opportunity.

-You are now entering the 6th week of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. What is at this point the situation on the frontline?

-Situation on the frontline is showing the dominance of Azerbaijani army. We liberate one village in one city after another. And during this time on the battlefield Azerbaijan liberated large part of its territory which was under occupation for almost thirty years, and successful offensive operation of the Azerbaijani army continues. And this once again shows that we are a strong country, and we are fighting on our own soil. We restore the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan, territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. By the way, we implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions, which demanded withdrawal of Armenian troops from our territories but were not implemented by Armenia for almost thirty years.

-You want to recover the seven occupied districts-5+2. How much of those lands have you already recovered?

-Actually 4 of the 5 occupied districts have already been liberated, either completely or partially. Today we are in an active phase of de-occupation of other districts which have been under occupation. And as I said, we implement the UN Security Council resolutions, and by the way we implement part of the basic principles. Because the basic principles for settlement which have been proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group actually demanded the liberation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, Armenia was not willing to do it voluntarily. Therefore, we had to force them to do it.

-Both sides have agreed already to three humanitarian ceasefire. But it helped not even a few minutes. Why wasn't it possible to stop the war and sit down to talks?

-I think one of the reasons why these ceasefires didn't work, was the attempt of Armenia to regain back the territories which have been already liberated by us. In other words, they wanted to occupy them again. Therefore, they tried to use the ceasefire, which as you correctly mentioned was announced on humanitarian grounds, in order to mobilize their resources and launch a new attack. And when they failed to do it, they launched a ballistic missile attack from the territory of Armenia on the second largest city of Azerbaijan, Ganja. They did it twice. But first time on the 10th of October right after the ceasefire was announced. And that caused the killings of almost 10 civilians and tens have been wounded. So, they brutally violated the first ceasefire. The second ceasefire also was violated by them in about five minutes after the announced time. And the third ceasefire they violated by attacking the peaceful city of Barda, where 21 civilians were killed and 70 wounded. So, all three times it was Armenian deliberate, aggressive attack on us, and we had to respond, we had to defend ourselves.

-You said that you want a concrete calendar for the withdrawal of Armenian troops. Armenia said they are willing to compromise and not to surrender or capitulate those territories. Are you willing to compromise too and what compromise it looks like?

-First of all, our position have been already many times declared during this almost forty days. On many occasions, I said that our task is to restore the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, return one million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons to their homelands, to the territories where they lived for centuries. And after that, to provide peaceful co-existence between Azerbaijani and Armenian community in that area. Our position is based on the common sense, on humanitarian grounds and is supported by international community. So, it is very clear, Armenia, when they talk about compromise they do not say anything concrete. They talk only about self-determination. But self-determination is not a compromise on their side. They should be more accurate in their position because it is very ambiguous now. Therefore, we demanded the time-table for withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories. And we demanded it from the very first day of the clashes. So, if Armenia listened to us, and behaved in a reasonable way, today we wouldn't have had the situation which we are now facing. The war

would have stopped maybe a month ago. Therefore, compromise from Armenian side should be very precise. And the time-table for withdrawal from part of Aghdam district which is still under occupation and from Kalbajar and Lachin should be presented to us. And Armenian prime minister should personally declare that. Not only do they give us the time-table, but they also do not say that they will liberate those territories. During all this time, since 27 September, never Armenian military-political leadership said anything about liberation of territories. In this case, they actually show disrespect to Minsk Group co-chairs, who elaborated these principles providing return of seven territories and they actually lead to more escalation. So, we expect from Armenian prime minister to say openly, publicly that they will withdraw from Kalbajar, Lachin and the remaining part of Aghdam.

-And if not, there is only the military option for you.

-Nothing is left, there is no other option. We don't want to continue military operations. I said many times and can repeat today, if Armenian prime minister, personally him, the person who is responsible for this bloodshed makes such a statement, we are ready to stop immediately. I am a person who keeps his words, and we will do it. But he doesn't say. He wants to win time, he wants to have the ceasefire in order to get some more military assistance. He wants to use this ceasefire in order to launch new attacks on Azerbaijan, and to regain back the territories which we liberated. That's what he is after.

-Are you willing to sit down at this point with Mr. Pashinyan or is there no point in it?

-No. No point in that at all. I had many meetings with him during the last two years. But all of them were absolutely useless and senseless. Except the first meetings where he promised me that if Azerbaijan gives him a time after the so-called revolution, he will make his homework, he will strengthen his position politically in Armenia. Then, he will be willing to work constructively in order to implement the basic principles. That was what he told me in the early months of his leadership in Armenia. But after a year, he said completely different things. He said that there will be no centimeter of land to be returned to Azerbaijan. He said "Karabakh is Armenia". He said that Azerbaijan has to negotiate with the so-called "authorities of this quasi entity Nagorno-Karabakh". So, he did everything to destroy negotiation process. Therefore, at this point, I don't see any sense meeting with him. Our foreign ministers met recently in Geneva. And I think, this is the proper format now for the communications.

-You said that almost during thirty years the Minsk Group did nothing, or didn't reach any to recover the occupied territories. Now you what do you expect from US, Russia and France?

-Yes, you are right, I said that Minsk Group did not deliver any result. But at the same time, I said that I cannot completely ignore their activity and only criticize them. Because the basic principles which are on the table now, it is the principles which were elaborated with the assistance of the Minsk Group. So, they worked, they tried. But they did not use all their tools which they have in order to press Armenia to liberate the territories. Each of these countries unilaterally has enough leverages on Armenia, whether it's military support, political support, economic support, diaspora support et cetera. But they did not use these instruments in their hands. They did not insist on implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions which they themselves adopted as permanent members of the UN Security Council. Therefore, the fact that there was no result, of course, demonstrates their unwillingness rather than they could not. If they could not, then who can? Can you find more powerful countries in the world? The three permanent members of the Security Council cannot influence small, impoverished, dependent Armenia? They just didn't want. They wanted the situation to be stable, this is true. They wanted a peaceful scenario. But when they saw that for almost thirty years there is no peaceful scenario, and the new Armenian government actually destroys the process by statements and actions, I think they should have acted.

And I called many times, talking with their leaders, talking with their high-ranking officials, 'insert pressure on Armenia, put sanctions'. If you don't want to put sanctions, at least pronounce it. Announce it that the sanctions will be imposed, otherwise there will be no other mechanism to influence this aggressor. So, today, I think they realized that what they were saying many years, that 'there is no military solution to the conflict' was wrong. And we changed that reality. There is a military solution. But today, what we are talking about let's just close that page of military solution and move to the political solutions. So, military-political solution must prevail. We are ready to stop today if Armenian prime minister says what I already demanded from him and peace process should be based now on implementation of the rest part of the basic principles which partly have been already implemented. We need a precise time-table for Kalbajar, Lachin and part of Aghdam to be liberated. And then, I think the peace will come to the region.

-I now want to ask you about the statements of Amnesty International that both sides actually have used cluster bombs and now you and also Yerevan is saying that both sides use phosphorous weapons against the civilians. Do you use weapons internationally forbidden?

-We do not use forbidden weapons. We have enough ammunition in order to restore our territorial integrity, first. Second, we do not attack civilians, we do not attack cities in Nagorno-Karabakh after 10th of October. Before, yes, we admit it. But that was because most of the military units and infrastructure of Armenian army was concentrated in the so-called capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, Khankandi. So we had to. We had to hit those important military objects in order to provide security for us and to make our operation more efficient. But after the humanitarian ceasefire was announced, and many times we announced that, we never hit any city or any village, where people lived. What Armenian did on the contrary, they launched ballistic missiles from Armenian territory to Ganja, and it is proved. Though Armenian prime minister said it was not them, but it is ridiculous. Because ballistic missile launch is being monitored by the satellites. Everybody knows from where it was launched and what was the goal of that missile. It was deliberately hitting the civilian compounds in Ganja, two times. They hit Barda two times with very destructive "Smerch" missiles. 21 persons were killed and 70 wounded only by one attack. There have been many attacks. They attacked a funeral ceremony in Tartar. That is absolutely beyond any norms of human behavior. When people were burying the person who died they hit the cemetery and four people were killed. And the cluster bombs which they used have been verified by international media and NGOs. I am sure that the first who reported about that were international media who visited them. And Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch just didn't have any other option rather than to acknowledge that. But the question is, why they didn't come in the first place to Azerbaijan. Why were they working only on Armenian side? Only after international media, Western media showed those cluster bombs which Armenian's use, then these two NGOs confirmed that. It is good that they did. But frankly speaking I cannot imagine how they could not confirm it, because when it's obvious.

-Russia, Mr. Lavrov said yesterday there are nearly 2000 mercenaries battling or combatting in Nagorno-Karabakh. What do you say regarding this?

-I answered many times to this groundless accusations, and I frankly speaking, regret that high-ranking officials of countries which supposed to be neutral, which supposed to be acting within their mandate which was given to them by OSCE, use this unverified, groundless so-called information and rumors, first. Second, we don't have any mercenaries. Many times I said about that, we don't need them. We have an army of 100 thousand fighters. We can recruit several times more, if we announce total mobilization which we don't do unlike what Armenia did. There is no evidence of any foreign fighters fighting on our side. No evidence during this time since more than one month. Not a single document, not a single proof was given to us, only statements. But then why they don't see what is happening on Armenian side? How many mercenaries are fighting on Armenian side? Why neither Russia, nor France which tries to accuse us, why didn't say anything about that? We have a list of people already eliminated with foreign passports. American, French, Canadian, Lebanese, from Iraq, from countries of the post-Soviet area. Tens of them coming from Georgia. Yes, they are native Armenians, but it doesn't make any difference. If they are citizens of other country, they are considered to be acting there illegally. And so far, nothing was said about that. Though, we have proofs. We have passports in our hands. We have evidence, video. Nothing is said about that. So, this is a selective approach which cannot be accepted by us. It is not in line with the mandate of mediators. I said many times, mediators must be neutral. If they take sides, it's up to them, but then they have to step down from mediation. Every country can have good or bad relations with any country. We understand there is special feelings towards Armenians due to some reasons from some countries. But in national capacity, we don't mind. But if you are mediator, please, be neutral. And stay away from accusations. If we start to accuse, those who accuse us about mercenaries, about what they do in different parts of the world, it will be a long story, very long story. We don't do it. Therefore, we expect the same from our partners.

-What do you say to those who state that Turkey is not only giving you political help, but also a military one?

-I would say that this is another provocation, another false news. There is no any military support from Turkey, apart from the fact that we are buying modern military equipment from Turkey. This is true. And this is a sophisticated, modern equipment that I think every army in the world would have envied about. And Turkey's military industrial complex really demonstrates miracles. And this equipment helps

us a lot on the battlefield. But we buy it. We sign contracts. Everything is transparent. Everything is legal. We buy weapons from other countries. Why nobody talks about how many weapons we bought from Russia? Only Turkey. Because Turkey is now in the center of attack from unfortunately, different European politicians. There are attempts to demonize Turkey. There are attempts to blackmail Turkey, to press it. This is absolutely unacceptable. We buy, main of our weapons from Russia. We buy weapons from other countries. Only Turkey is here. So, this is first. Second, those who always keep saying that Turkey provides military support to us, why don't they say that Russia provides military support to Armenia? A mediator, Minsk Group co-chair. We have proofs in our hands. We delivered this information to Russian officials. How much weapons were delivered to Armenia during this forty days? Why nobody talks about that? Let's talk about that. Let's be fair. Therefore, first, this is wrong. Second, we buy Turkish military equipment and we will continue to do it. And third, there should be no double standards about that. And those, by the way, who tell that Azerbaijan is militarily supported by Turkey, I think should refrain from these absurd accusations.

-Turkey obviously has interests in the region as has also Iran and Russia. Armenia has asked Russia for a possibility to guarantee its security. Do you fear an internationalization of the war?

-That is what Armenia wanted to do from the very beginning. And we were always against. I said many times to all the countries, 'stay away from this conflict'. It is our business, it's our battle for territorial integrity. And there should be no attempts to internationalize the conflict. But Armenia did everything to do it. And the letter which Armenian prime minister sent to Russian president, not only demonstrates that they already admit their defeat, that we beat them on the battlefield, it also shows that they want to internationalize the conflict. They want to drag Russia into a direct participation on the ground, which is absolutely unacceptable. As far as I know, it was rejected by Russia and Russian foreign minister issued a statement about that. That maybe I'm not precisely correct in my words, but the sense was that the fight is taking place on the territory of Azerbaijan. If Azerbaijan attacks, or if any country attacks Armenia, then Russia will have their obligations. But the battle is going on our soil. So, this attempts I think are absolutely useless. Russian position was articulated by the foreign minister. Iranian position was also articulated. Probably you heard about Iranian plan for the settlement, which provides territorial integrity of countries. And recently, the Iranian religious leader made a statement that Armenia should liberate internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. So, this is a reaction of two neighbors. Position of Turkey is well-known. It always stands for international law and UN Security Council resolutions. Georgia, on many occasions before, also supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. This is a position of our neighbors. So, Armenia is in isolation. So, they want to internationalize the conflict. They want to exploit some fake news and some fake news from the history, in order to get support. But the best way for Armenia to act now is to admit their defeat, admit our victory and make a commitment that they will liberate the remaining part of the territories.

-If they recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh what would your reaction be?

-You know, if they wanted to recognize, they would have recognized long time ago. Why didn't they recognize it before? Because, they clearly understand that by this very irrational step, negotiations will stop. Absolutely. So, if they do it, there will be nothing to talk about. And then, no peaceful initiative, no basic principles, no future settlement, nothing will be on the table. So, I think that they understand it. They always wanted to use it as a kind of an instrument in order to frighten us, saying that if Azerbaijan does that we will recognize. I tell them many times during this days of war and I tell now, Armenian prime minister, recognize Nagorno-Karabakh today. Do it. Show your courage. Show that your words mean something. Recognize Nagorno-Karabakh today. Again, and you will see that they will not do it. Because they are cowards. They can fight only against peaceful civilians and when they see our strength and our unity they run away.

-Will you be willing to accept an autonomy of the region?

-This should be part of the future discussions, on the basic principles. Because the first part of the basic principles demanded the withdrawal of occupied territories. Five plus two in time-table, then, there were other elements of the basic principles, like security, peacekeeping operations, status of Nagorno-Karabakh and we always were very open to discuss it. We offered them many times different ways, but they rejected. We offered them autonomy inside Azerbaijan. We offered them cultural autonomy, we said that there are good examples in the world, in Europe, in Scandinavia this Aland Islands, in Italy this South Tyrol district, in many other. But they rejected everything. They demanded independence only. And they

wanted us to recognize this independence. By doing that they actually knowing that we will never do it, they were doing everything to freeze the conflict. So, I don't know, we need to first to end this hot stage of the conflict, come back to negotiation table. Armenia should make these commitments which I already said. And then we can talk about what will be happening in the future. I cannot say anything about that now.

-Thank you very much, Mr. President. I really appreciate your time.

-Thank you very much for your questions, for your interest in Azerbaijan.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva visited Alley of Honors and Alley of Martyrs

08.11.2020 [13:14]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Victorious Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva have today visited the Alley of Honors and the Alley of Martyrs.

AZERTAC reports that the head of state addressed the nation at the Alley of Martyrs.

President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva first paid respect to national leader Heydar Aliyev at the Alley of Honors.

President Ilham Aliyev laid a wreath at the tomb of national leader Heydar Aliyev.

The state anthem of Azerbaijan was played.

The head of state and his wife also paid tribute to prominent ophthalmologist, academician Zarifa Aliyeva.

They also put flowers at the graves of state figure Aziz Aliyev and physician, scientist Tamerlan Aliyev.

President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva then visited the Alley of Martyrs. The head of state and the first lady commemorated Azerbaijani heroes who gave their lives for the country's independence and territorial integrity, and put flowers at their graves.

President Ilham Aliyev laid a wreath at the Eternal Flame monument.

The state anthem of Azerbaijan was played.

The head of state addressed the nation at the Alley of Martyrs.

Address of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Victorious Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev to the nation

- Dear fellow countrymen, dear sisters and brothers!

It is with great pride that I declare that the city of Shusha has been liberated from occupation! Shusha is ours! Karabakh is ours! I heartily congratulate all the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion. I heartily congratulate all the people of Shusha.

Shusha, which was under occupation for 28 and a half years, has been liberated! Shusha is free now! We have returned to Shusha! We have won this historic victory on the battlefield. 8 November 2020 will forever remain in the history of Azerbaijan. This history will live forever. This is the day of our glorious victory! We have won this victory on the battlefield, not at the negotiating table. I have said many times that, despite all the statements, there are military solutions to this conflict, the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and we are proving it on the battlefield today. Nearly 30 years of meaningless negotiations did not bring us any closer to the result. Our ancient historical lands had been under occupation for almost 30 years. In the process of negotiations, the Armenian side simply wanted to gain time, strengthen the status quo and perpetuate it. Over the years, signals sent to Azerbaijan from various power centers were repeatedly urging us to put up with the situation. However, showing determination, courage and political will, we did not go for any agreement that did not meet the interests of the Azerbaijani people. I have repeatedly stated from all international forums that the restoration of our lands and territorial integrity is our main task, and we are fulfilling this task. Negotiations did not yield any results. They were just trying to fool us, they were just trying to freeze the issue. We have won this victory on the battlefield, we have won this victory by giving martyrs. May God have mercy on all our martyrs! I ask God's mercy for all our martyrs who died in the first Karabakh war and the second Karabakh war- the Patriotic war as we call it. I wish God's healing to our wounded compatriots. We are liberating our lands from occupiers at the cost of the lives and blood of our people, soldiers and officers. We are expelling the occupiers from our lands and we will expel them!

Shusha was under occupation for 28 and a half years. Shusha has a special place in the history of Azerbaijan. This is our ancient and historical city. For centuries, Azerbaijanis have lived, built and created in Shusha. Shusha is a pearl not only of Azerbaijan but also of the entire Caucasus. However, by occupying Shusha, the hated enemy dealt a great blow to our cultural heritage, destroyed our historical sites, destroyed our mosques and insulted us. We have now returned to Shusha. We will restore all our historical sites, all

our mosques, and a call to prayer will be heard in Shusha again after 28 years. A few years ago, at the opening of a mosque built on my instructions in the Jojuq Marjanly settlement which was liberated from occupation after the April 2016 fighting, I stated that this mosque was similar to the Shusha mosque. It is of the same size and architectural style. I said that one day we would restore our mosques destroyed by Armenian vandals in Shusha, and that day is coming. Today, the Azerbaijani flag is flying in Shusha. Today, all the people of Azerbaijan are proud to welcome this good news.

We are gathering strength in a focused manner, tirelessly, despite all the pressures. We are building up economic power. If we did not have economic power, it would not be possible to achieve this victory. First of all, economic independence had to be secured and was secured. Today, Azerbaijan is not economically dependent on anyone, on any country or international financial institution. This independence has allowed us the opportunity to develop our country and strengthen our army at the same time. We buy all the military equipment and weapons needed for our Army from foreign markets. If we didn't have economic opportunities, how could we get them? I think that by pursuing a successful policy within the country, we have created a unique model of development for the world. Our internal solidarity, national unity and common cause gave us additional strength, did not allow some hated foreign circles to implement their ugly plans in respect of Azerbaijan. However, there were such plans, there were such attempts. We have repulsed these attempts by showing political resolve and unity, we have defended our pride as a people, as a nation, we have defended our independent choice, and we have proved that no-one can or will interfere in our work. Without this unity and national solidarity, we would never have been able to liberate our lands from occupiers. The main goal of the smear campaign, the campaign of libel and defamation against us over the years was to remove us from our main task, to distance us, to drown us in internal problems and to keep the occupied territories in the hands of the occupiers forever. Strong political will and the unity of the people and government overthrew these plans.

The third key factor in our victory is our success at the international level. We have proved to the whole world that Karabakh has always been the land of Azerbaijan. We have proved that the Azerbaijani people have lived in these lands for centuries. We have proved that the Armenian population was settled to these lands only 200 years ago, how it was resettled and for what purpose. We presented it all to the world community, with evidence and facts. We have proved that Nagorno-Karabakh is historical and ancient land of Azerbaijan, and this issue must be resolved on the basis of the norms and principles of international law. All of the world's leading organizations, all international organizations have adopted fair resolutions and decisions on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Four resolutions of the UN Security Council, resolutions of the UN General Assembly, resolutions of the Non-Aligned Movement, resolutions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, resolutions of the European Parliament and other international organizations unequivocally recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan. This gave us additional strength. If we had not done that, the processes surrounding the conflict today could cause us great problems. Over the years, we have been able to establish relations with many countries on the basis of sincere, businesslike and mutual respect. Many countries consider Azerbaijan a strategic partner, and this expression is already reflected in international documents. We have been able to establish relations with all neighboring countries on the basis of sincere friendship, mutual respect and mutual trust. If we had not done that, a completely different process could have taken place around the conflict today.

When Shusha was occupied, our main problems were that we did not have an army and the leadership could not fulfill its duties. At the international level, Azerbaijan had strained relations with almost all countries. We were almost isolated. But today we have isolated Armenia. Our transnational projects have created a completely new landscape in the region. We have redesigned the energy and transport maps of the region. The projects implemented on our initiative meet the interests not only of our people, but also the interests of many countries, including the countries of the region. We have both bilateral and trilateral cooperation formats with neighboring countries. All this has greatly strengthened Azerbaijan's international authority. Without these achievements, the problem could remain frozen.

Finally and, first of all, army building. During these 17 years, the key part of my work has been devoted to army building, to strengthening our army, to equipping our army with the most modern weaponry. It was not an easy task either. Material resources alone are not enough to buy these weapons. At the same time, diplomatic and political efforts must be made, and we have achieved all this. Today, Azerbaijan provides for its military needs from many countries. At the same time, the defense industry has been created in Azerbaijan on my initiative. We meet the needs of our army largely through domestic

production. Azerbaijan produces more than 1,000 types of military products, including the most modern ones. This is our activity – building the army, solving the material and housing problems of our servicemen, solving the problems of the retired servicemen, providing them with apartments, improving the working conditions of our servicemen. We have rebuilt almost all our military camps and military bases, and they meet the highest standards. Of course, first of all, there is combat capability. The ability to fight has increased. Repeated military parades on Azadlig Square have shown the world our strength.

Increasing combat capability is a key factor in army building. We use modern weapons, we use technology and we destroy enemy equipment, but it is Azerbaijani soldiers who liberate our lands, it is Azerbaijani officers who liberate them. They are the ones who chase the enemy with a flag and a weapon in their hands, soldiers who destroy the enemy. Long live our soldiers!

We have created such an army! We said to the occupiers, we said to them, put an end to the occupation before it is too late. Therefore, our policy was unequivocal at all times. We have said that if the issue is not resolved peacefully, we will resolve the issue militarily. I have said this many times. Therefore, I have been criticized by some countries. I said to them: weren't our lands occupied by military means? Has Armenia occupied our lands peacefully? Every country has the right to self-defense. This right is given to us by the UN Charter. I said that if I see that the talks are completely ineffective, we will be left with no other option. Let everyone know this – the enemy, its supporters and the mediators involved in this matter. I have always kept my word. I did what I told the Azerbaijani people. I kept my word on this issue and we are already celebrating the Victory.

Since 27 September, more than 200 cities, villages and settlements have been liberated, including the city of Fuzuli, which has been completely destroyed. The hated enemy did not leave a single safe building there. Jabrayil is completely destroyed. Gubadli, Zangilan are completely destroyed. Villages, cities. Hadrut settlement, Sugovushan settlement and the city of Shusha today.

Our victory march continues. There are still occupied lands and the fighting still continues. If the Armenian leadership does not respond to my demand, we will go to the end. No-one can stop us. There is no force in the world that can stop us. Armenia has already admitted its bitter defeat, has humiliated itself and insulted its people. The Armenian leadership now seeks help, military assistance, weapons and equipment from other countries. Where is your invincible army now? We have destroyed it. All their words, all their statements were a myth, a lie. The invincible army is the Azerbaijani Army! We showed this on the battlefield, expelled the enemy from the lands on our own. Billions of dollars have been spent over 30 years, fortifications have been built, engineering facilities have been built. But we have destroyed them all – at the cost of our spirit, strength and unity!

I want to say again that our victory march continues. Enemy forces must be withdrawn from all occupied territories. This is our demand. International norms and principles, decisions and resolutions of international organizations require exactly that.

Dear sisters and brothers, today I give this good news to my native people here in the Alley of Martyrs. This is not accidental. This is natural. Today, I bow once again to the souls of our martyrs. Today I declare that the blood of our martyrs does not remain unavenged. The blood of the victims of Armenian atrocities, the victims of Khojaly, does not remain unavenged. We took our revenge on the battlefield. We have never fought against civilians, we didn't do it this time either. Although the hated enemy has killed 93 and wounded more than 400 civilians with cowardly fire. But I said no, we are Azerbaijanis! We will take our revenge on the battlefield! We have destroyed their army, we have destroyed their equipment, we are destroying and will destroy. We will drive out the enemy!

Today, I also visited the grave of great leader Heydar Aliyev and paid my respects. I said in my heart, I am happy to have fulfilled my father's will. We have liberated Shusha! This is a great victory! The souls of our martyrs and the Great Leader are happy today! Congratulations, Azerbaijan! Congratulations, Azerbaijanis of the world!

These days I receive thousands of letters from Azerbaijanis around the world, from people living in Azerbaijan. I get thousands of letters every day. I just regret that I can't read them all. There is simply not enough time. What wonderful words, what great support! Today we prove to the whole world that we are a great nation, we are a proud nation! We are an invincible people! We show the enemy's place on the battlefield!

These days, I have repeatedly appealed to the people of Azerbaijan and showed my fist to the enemy. I said that this is not such a fist. This is an iron fist. We will crush the head of the enemy with this iron fist!

At the same time, this fist is a symbol of our unity. Today, the people of Azerbaijan are as united as this fist! It will always be the case! This unity will last forever! This unity will allow us to fulfill all our responsibilities in the future. For all these years – for 17 years – I have felt the support of the Azerbaijani people. I have seen your trust, your kind attitude to me. It gives me strength. This is invaluable support for my policy. I have always assured the people of Azerbaijan that I will serve my homeland and my people with dignity and loyalty. I am glad that I have kept my word. As always, I have kept my word.

Giving this good news to the people of Azerbaijan on this historic day is perhaps one of the happiest days of my life.

Dear Shusha, you are free!

Dear Shusha, we are back!

Dear Shusha, we will revive you!

Shusha is ours! Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by BBC News

09.11.2020 [12:56]

On November 6, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by BBC News.

AZERTAC presents the interview.

-President Aliyev, thank you for your time for speaking to us on BBC News. Do you intent to fight for every square inch of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding seven territories?

-Our position was very clear from the very beginning. We are ready, and are still ready to stop any time when Armenian side will commit itself to the liberation of the occupied territories. I am saying this from the very beginning of the war that if Armenian prime minister publicly will make a commitment that they will liberate the occupied territories we will stop. But so far it's already forty days and there is no sign of him to say this.

-So, that means you will be fighting to the finish.

-We will fight until the end if Armenia does not make a commitment that they will withdraw from occupied territories. I think Armenia is making a big mistake, because if they listened to us from the very beginning the war would have stopped long time ago, and we would have been already on the negotiation table.

-But with respect Mr. President, you are delivering an ultimatum. You are saying they have to agree to give up all of this territory, and then there can be talks. That's a very big precondition for talks.

-No, not exactly, because what I am saying is based on the basic principles and the basic principles are very clear with respect to the liberation of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. It is a very clear message to Armenia and unfortunately, Armenia did not agree to the basic principles which have been elaborated by the Minsk Group co-chairs and the previous Armenian leadership. These basic principles say that in the first stage they have to liberate five occupied territories, at the second stage-two. But four out of the five have already been liberated. Therefore, if they do it when they will liberate part of Aghdam, when they will liberate Kalbajar and Lachin, we will stop.

-So, just to be clear, President, because these locations are not familiar to our international audience. Are you saying that if the Armenian leadership agrees to vacate the territories outside of Nagorno-Karabakh you will stop, you will not fight on?

-Exactly. That is the position which I articulated many times, at the same time, this is not the whole issues on the negotiation table. Of course, after that we will work on the return of Azerbaijani refugees to Nagorno-Karabakh. Because before the war in 1990s, there have been 40 thousand Azerbaijanis living in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the percentage of Azerbaijani population was 25%. So, they expelled them all, and after that, committed ethnic cleansing, and then, announced independence.

-But the fear is, that if you take control of Nagorno-Karabakh by force, that you may do exactly the same. There are very strong fears being expressed by Armenia that there will be ethnic cleansing of their people.

-These are groundless accusations. First, if Armenia is really concerned about that, why they do not agree to the basic principles? Because if the basic principles are confirmed, and Armenia will make a commitment which I already demand from them for many times, then everything will stop.

-So, you are not asking them to withdraw from Nagorno-Karabakh. You are asking only for the territories alongside.

-We ask and we demand the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions which were adopted back in 1993, which demanded immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories. With respect to the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, they will continue to live there. They are our citizens, and I on many occasions expressed this position.

-Well, with respect President Aliyev, you are saying that the Armenians will consider to live there as your citizens. You have very recently said and I am quoting you here: "If they do not leave we will chase them like dogs." Now, that's hardly the kind of statement that would make people feel safe.

-No. Please be accurate with my statements. What I said, I meant those who continue to occupy our territories, I meant Armenian military-political leadership, I meant the so-called “authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh”, this criminal junta which has already, by the way, run away. And I got information that the so-called “leader of Nagorno-Karabakh” is already in Yerevan. So, I meant them, I didn’t mean Armenian people.

-So, are you saying that you will give an absolute guarantee that there will be no ethnic cleansing of Armenian citizens in Nagorno-Karabakh?

-Yes. We are not Armenians. They committed ethnic cleansing against us. They expelled all Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts. Thus, we have one million refugees as a result of the ethnic cleansing policy of Armenia. But we will not behave the same way, we will not take revenge. I said many times even when they bombed Ganja, when they bombed Barda, when they bombed other cities and killed 92 people, civilians, I said we will take revenge on the battlefield. Therefore, taking into account, this official position and the fact that there are thousands of Armenians who live in Azerbaijan, and nobody is ethnically cleansing them, why should we do it there?

-Well, with regard to the Armenians who are living here in Azerbaijan, we have been told that many live in fear that they change their surnames, because they do not want to be identified openly as Armenians. So, how can Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh have confidence that they will be safe?

-No. This is wrong information.

-Well, it's coming from people who are here.

-Well, maybe somebody got married and changed the name that's a usual practice here. But no. There are many Armenians who live here and we know that they are Armenians. And by the way, I can tell you, not many people know that the sister of the former Armenian defense minister Arutunyan lives in Azerbaijan. If you would like we can organize the meeting with her. Therefore, this is not actually fear, this is Armenian propaganda.

-But, if this is a propaganda President Aliyev, there is clearly propaganda on both sides. There is institutionalized messaging against the Armenians which takes place here as part of the state dialogue. People have been primed to have hatred for the other side. Are you actually expecting them to be able to co-exist?

-Why they can co-exist in other parts of the world? Do you know that there are villages in the neighboring Georgia, where Armenians and Azerbaijanis live together in the same village? They live together in Russia, they live together in Ukraine, they live together in Azerbaijan, in many other parts of the world. And if you observe the situation in the world now, apart from some pro-Armenian rallies in the West, the situation between Armenians and Azerbaijanis is very calm and quiet. Why can they live there and cannot live here?

-Do you honestly expect a single Armenian to stay and remain in Nagorno-Karabakh, if you take control, and live under the rule of Azerbaijan?

-I think it is possible, because I, as a President, say today and said many times that we want to live side by side. And if we did not want to live side by side why should I say that? Today, as you know, Azerbaijani Army is winning the battle. Today, we liberate one city after another, one village after another. And in principle, anyone in Azerbaijan can say, look, they committed a genocide in Khojaly, they expelled Azerbaijanis from their native lands, they destroyed all our cities and villages.

-Armenians, of course, also claim that they were expelled, and they were the victims of massacres over the years?

-From where have they been expelled? From where? They have not been expelled. We did not commit ethnic cleansing against Armenians. No. Armenians live in Azerbaijan. They expelled us not only from Nagorno-Karabakh, but from seven districts on the administrative border of Nagorno-Karabakh where Armenian population have never lived. They changed the names of the cities, of the villages.

-Well talking about religion President Aliyev, we have had an attack in Armenia. A church, a cathedral attacked.

-That was not in Armenia.

-We have had an attack in Nagorno-Karabakh, I beg your pardon, a church which was shelled twice on the same day. Now, you have said that possibly it was a mistake, you have said you will carry out an investigation. What's the result of the investigation?

-In order to investigate it, we have to be there to investigate. I said many times, either it was a mistake of our artillery or it was a deliberate provocation by Armenians themselves.

-So, they shelled their own church?

-Exactly.

-They, of course, deny this.

-Of course, they deny, they deny everything. They denied that they hit Ganja with ballistic missiles from the territory of Armenia. Armenian prime minister said that it is false information. Though your country, United States, France, Russia can easily detect from where the ballistic missile was launched.

-But with regards to the church...

-With regards to the church, I said, either it was a mistake or they did it deliberately, because the images of that church which I have seen, show that it is a very minor damage. And this damage can be repaired within maximum two weeks. This is first. Second, you are here in Baku, probably you have seen Armenian church in the city center which we restored and we keep thousands of Armenian books. If we are destroying churches as Armenians say, why didn't we destroy it here in Baku?

-But can you say categorically that your forces did not attack the church?

-I say categorically that many times, either it was a mistake or...

-So, you may have done it.

-Who you? Who do you mean by saying you?

-Your forces may have done it.

-It could have been by mistake only. Because there was no military target. Church was not among the military targets. We had military targets in Stepanakert, which is the city called Khankandi in Azerbaijani. We had military targets in Shusha and we hit those military targets because they attacked us. So, probably that was a mistake.

-But could you have made a mistake twice in the same day? It was hit twice?

-Why not? Have you seen the images of Azerbaijani mosques on the occupied territories? They are all destroyed. They keep pigs in our mosques. And the recent video footage of mosque in Zangilan which was liberated show that they kept pigs there.

-But you have made a point, President Aliyev, of talking about the military superiority of your army. You have a 100 thousand men. You have the most sophisticated weapons that can be bought from Israel, from Turkey, particularly the Turkish drones. So, with all of that expertise at your disposal, could there be two mistaken episodes of shelling a church?

-Absolutely, there could be. Because we need to be there in order to investigate. And when we will be there we will repair it. We will restore it. You will see. When we go back to Shusha we will restore it.

-But doesn't that mean if these weapons can be so precise and mistakes can be made so easily that you shouldn't be using them in civilian areas.

-We are not using in civilian areas. We are using them in order to destroy military infrastructure.

-With respect, President Aliyev...

-The city of Khankandi was full of military objects. The city of Shusha was full of military objects. We do not attack civilians unlike them. They attacked Ganja with ballistic missiles, deliberately destroying the civilian compound.

-Well, let me tell you President Aliyev, for our own BBC colleagues have seen that this is not hearsay, this is what was filmed, this was what experienced by BBC colleagues. They were in Stepanakert, in Nagorno-Karabakh on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of October. They witnessed random shelling of the town, including at an Emergency Service Center, an apartment block destroyed. As people tried to flee there was a drone overhead. Shortly afterwards more shelling nearby. They characterized it as indiscriminate shelling of a town without clear military targets. Now this is not hearsay, this was witnessed and filmed by the BBC.

-I doubt this witnessing. I doubt it.

-Well, they were there President Aliyev.

-So what, they were there. It doesn't mean anything. That can be fake news. We had military...

-And why would that be fake news? Why would any journalist go in there to sight to broadcast fake news?

-Because of the biased approach to the conflict. Because of this black propaganda against Azerbaijan in international media.

-So you cannot be guilty of any wrong. Everything is false news.

-Absolutely. It is false news. We closely watch the western media and during these 40 days I had maybe almost 30 interviews. All of them were very aggressive and as if it was not an interview, as if it was a kind of accusation. Nothing is happening on Armenian side? Nobody is asking Pashinyan why he hits with ballistic missile Ganja. Why he killed 92 people, why they attack funeral in Tartar, why they use Smerch with cluster bombs to attack Barda, killing 21 persons, and injuring 70. No one asks him, where does he get weapons? Only attack on us. Only demonizing Azerbaijan from international media. So, that's why what BBC, your colleagues, so-called witnessed there, I do not believe that.

-Well, in fact, they filmed it President Aliyev. But of course, it is important to say that there has been killing of civilians on both sides. There has been an indiscriminate shelling on both sides. We have witnessed here ourselves the aftermath of the attack in Ganja and which ballistic missile was used. So there is no doubt that there have been casualties on this side as well.

-Thank you for that.

-But equally, when you mention cluster munitions there is evidence that you have used cluster munitions in civilian areas, in the streets of Stepanakert, documented extensively by Human Rights Watch, photographs, videos, testimony from witnesses and they actually had the opportunity to go to the scene. Now why are you using cluster munitions which can be so imprecise in a civilian area?

-We are not using them. This is another fake news. It is Armenia who uses the cluster bombs.

-So everything is fake news.

-Of course. Why not? We are facing this fake news for decades. Do you know how many fake news were published in the British press about Azerbaijan? Thousands.

-But you admit President Aliyev you are fighting a war. You are making advances. But then you are telling us on the other hand you are not using these weapons.

-No, we are not, because we are fighting on the battlefield. We are fighting against Armenian army. We are not fighting against civilians. No sense in that, because our task is to liberate the territories. And we liberate one village, one city after another. And we do not use cluster bombs. We don't need it. We have enough other...

-So, the evidence uncovered by Human Rights Watch is fake also.

-Of course, because Human Rights Watch due to very biased approach to Azerbaijan, due to the fact they did not notice any wrong doing in Armenia even when journalists are dying in prison, even when main opposition leader is in prison. They don't report on that. Only against us. Therefore, we stopped cooperation with Human Rights Watch some 5-6 years ago and only now, when this war started, we invited them to come and see, because we wanted them to testify, because there was no way for them to say no. That's why we invited them. So, this organization is not credible in Azerbaijan.

-May I ask President Aliyev how many civilians have been killed on this side now? What is the death toll?

-92 civilians were killed, 405 were wounded, almost 3000 houses either demolished or seriously damaged by Pashinyan regime. So, this is the fact. And you can verify it, when you go there and see.

-We would like to be able to see the frontline for ourselves and during our last trip here we were prevented from travelling independently. Can you give us an assurance that we would be able to go there this time?

-Yes, I think it is possible, but the security measures must be taken in order to protect you. But I think it is possible. It is regulated by the general situation, by the martial law in Azerbaijan. Therefore, it must be in line with these temporary regulations.

-So we can't have free movement at the frontline.

What do you mean, on frontline? Going where the battle is?

-Yes.

There have been journalists there. There have been from...

-But not moving independently.

-What do you mean by saying, "independently"?

-Moving independently without minders from the government. Moving at their own discretion, which is what we do in other conflicts. We decide where we wish to go. We make our own choices we go there, we film.

-I am not sure about that. I think that must be checked with our authorities whether there is a possibility or not. Any company which foreign journalists have, only have one purpose, to protect them and to advise them where they can go and where they cannot go. But there is nothing to hide. You can see our destroyed villages. You have been to Ganja, probably you could go to Barda also. Therefore, we have nothing to hide. We are fighting on our own land. Armenian army is on our land. They are aggressors. We have been the victims of aggression, but today we pay back. Today we show them their place, and we will move them until the end, as I said, if they do not liberate voluntarily the remaining part of the territories.

-That sounds like a very chilling message to Armenian civilians.

-No. Why? We already talked about Armenian civilians. We have nothing wrong in communications with them. I said many times and I think what I say. I keep the words that after we liberate the territory from this criminal gangs which occupied our territory, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh will live much better. They will have more salaries, because the salaries in Azerbaijan is higher. More pensions, because pensions in Azerbaijan is three times higher than in Armenia. They will have all the social protection. We will invest in those areas largely. They will get rid of poverty.

-Will they have the full range of human rights which people here in Azerbaijan do not have? Will they have a fully free media? Will they have an opposition that's allowed to raise its voice. Will they be allowed to have the things that people here in Azerbaijan do not have?

-You think they do not have it? Why do you think that people in Azerbaijan do not have free media and opposition?

-Because this is what I am told by independent sources in this country.

-Which independent sources?

-Many independent sources.

-Tell me which.

-I certainly couldn't name sources.

-Oh, if you couldn't name that means you are just inventing the stories.

-So, you are saying that the media is not under a state control.

-Not at all.

-And there is a vibrant free opposition media.

-Of Course.

-Where do I see this?

-You can see it on internet. You can see it everywhere.

-But not in newspapers.

-Why? You can see it in newspapers. Whom do you call opposition here? Can I ask you?

-Well, is there allowed to be an opposition here?

-Yes, it is allowed of course.

-I mean NGOs are the subject of the crackdown, journalists are the subject of the crackdown.

-Not at all.

-Critics are in jail.

-No, not at all.

-None of this is true.

-Absolutely fake, absolutely. We have free media, we have free internet. Now, due to the martial law we have some restrictions but before there have been no restrictions. The number of internet users in Azerbaijan is more than 80 percent. Can you imagine the restriction of media in a country where internet is free, there is no censorship, and there are 80 percent of internet users? We have millions of people on Facebook. How can you say that we don't have free media. This is again, a biased approach. This is an attempt to create a perception in Western audience about Azerbaijan. We have opposition, we have NGOs, we have free political activity, we have free media, we have freedom of speech. But if you raise this question, can I ask you also one? How do you assess what happened to Mr Assange? Isn't it the reflection of free media in your country?

-We are not here to discuss my country.

-No, let's discuss. Let's discuss.

-No, President Aliyev.

-In order to accuse me saying that Armenians will not have free media here, let's talk about Assange. How many years, sorry, how many years he spent in Ecuadorian embassy and for what? And where is he

now? For journalistic activity you kept that person hostage actually killing him morally and physically. You did it, not us. And now he is in prison. So you have no moral right to talk about free media when you do these things.

-Returning to the conflict...

-Yes, better return to the conflict, because this is not what you like. You like only to accuse, only to attack. But look at the mirror. I told many times. Before coming and lecturing us and in your question accusing me. It's not a question, it's an accusation. You talk like a prosecutor. Why? If you are so democratic and so objective why do you keep Assange in prison? For what? You keep him in prison because of his journalistic activity.

-I am not keeping him in prison President Aliyev.

-You don't like this.

-It's not a question you don't like this.

- You are not used to this.

-It is not the subject of our interview.

-Because you are used only to attack.

-It is not the subject of our interview.

It is not the subject of your interview, but you raise it.

-You raised it.

-No. You raised it.

-You raised the case of Assange.

-You said if you don't have a free media in your country how Armenians can live without opposition? That was your accusation.

-You have answered the question President Aliyev. Could I ask you going back to the conflict? As you say, forty days and counting. How long do you expect this to continue? Is this going to be a battle through the winter?

-Nobody knows. Again, coming back to the beginning of our conversation, if Pashinyan tells today that yes, I accept basic principles and I will liberate part of Aghdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin in one week, or in two weeks, we will stop immediately.

-But he doesn't need to give you a guarantee for liberating the rest of Nagorno-Karabakh. You are speaking about the territories on the outside. I just want to be very clear to understand your position.

-Yes, that's the basic principles. On the basic principles we have very clear picture. Liberation of seven districts, then return of Azerbaijani IDPs, then return of Azerbaijani people, refugees to Nagorno-Karabakh.

-So he has to give you Nagorno-Karabakh also.

-He has to allow Azerbaijanis to go back there. To go back to Shusha.

-So you don't need to be in control of Nagorno-Karabakh.

-Well, what do you mean by the "control"?

-Do you need to take physical control of Nagorno-Karabakh and remove the Nagorno-Karabakh defense forces, remove any Armenian official presence or are you saying that you will be satisfied if your civilians are allowed to return?

-In the basic principles which Armenia did not accept, and actually they are not valid because Armenia did not accept them, in the basic principles there is a provision that Azerbaijanis will return there and they will be living there in peace, in security, with security guarantees. We did not go too far in negotiation process in order to specify what kind of governance will be there. Our position is there must be a certain level of self-governance, like municipal governance or cultural autonomy for Armenians. But we didn't go too far. And if Pashinyan did what I ask from the very beginning, when we liberated Fuzuli, then the war would have stopped, and we would have talked now about how to move on the negotiation table. But he doesn't make this commitment. Therefore, if it continues like that we will continue. There is no other way. We will go until the end before we restore the territorial integrity of the country, which is recognized by the whole world.

-So, President Aliyev, you have made significant advances already and taking territory alongside Nagorno-Karabakh. How soon do you plan to start sending your civilians back?

-First we will need to evaluate the damage caused by Armenian state against Azerbaijan and against the property of our citizens. Because in the liberated territories almost everything is destroyed. I said many times that in the big city of Fuzuli, where ten thousands of people live we could not find any building in order to put a flag on. So, we raised it on a derrick. Therefore, first, we will evaluate the damage, we will invite international experts in order to evaluate the damage which was caused to our ecology, to our infrastructure, to our civilians who lost their houses and to our state, to our historical heritage, because all the mosques were destroyed, all the museums were destroyed. This is first. And after that, of course, there will be lawsuits, lawsuits against Armenian state, and we are already preparing for that. Second, we will need to create at least initial conditions for people to live there. We need to provide construction materials we need to invest in infrastructure.

-So, do you think, it is a matter of years realistically?

-You know, we have already resettled 300 thousand refugees and IDPs during all these times of occupation. And the last years were the most impressive, because only this year we are resettling seven thousand families of refugees. So, we can, I think manage to resettle from 7 to 10 thousand families a year, but of course, for that we need to have infrastructure. We do it in Baku where everything is ready. But in those areas where everything is destroyed we need power stations, we need roads we need water supply. So, all that will take time. I don't know how long it will take but we will try to do everything to do it in a maximum shortest period.

-One or two final quick questions President Aliyev, if I may?

You have huge support from Turkey which is a very strong ally of Azerbaijan. How often do you speak to President Erdogan?

-Very often, especially now several times a week.

-And daily?

-Not daily, but if necessary, may be several times a day. We are brothers, we are friends, and you say huge support, you are right, but I want to specify, this is a political support and moral support. Nothing more than that.

-Are there Turkish pilots here, piloting the drones that are being used?

-No. no.

-So they are being used by your forces?

-Yes. Everything is used by our forces, not only Turkish drones, but Israeli drones and Russian military equipment and military equipment from other countries which we purchase and which we pay for, unlike Armenia which gets it free of charge. Everything is done by us.

-Do you foresee a day when you might want Turkish direct military involvement? We have seen that Armenia has already gone to Russia, and said 'what are you prepared to do?' Do you see a day when you would be asking Turkey to become more involved?

-I don't want to look too far ahead, because it will depend on the situation on the battlefield. It will depend on Armenia's behavior, and on other countries' behavior. Because on many occasions I said that we are against internationalization of the conflict, we asked all the countries, neighboring countries, and not neighboring countries to stay away from this conflict. We are fighting on our land, internationally recognized. So, this is our position. And I think that what is happening now will continue. So there will be no need for any kind of military involvement of Turkey. But, with Turkey, many years ago, we signed the document which provides also military support in case of aggression. So, with Turkey we have more or less the same format legal basis like Armenia and Russia has. So, if Azerbaijan will face an aggression and if Azerbaijan will see that the Turkish military support is needed, then we will consider this option.

-I'm going to beg your assistance just for two more questions, President Aliyev, if I may.

What would you say to those who argue and I'm sure you've heard this argument being made that one of the reasons why the conflict has reignited now and why you are pursuing such a strong advance is because of this very strong backing from Turkey that this really has been the clincher for you.

-No, not at all. And by the way, where is this Turkish military involvement? Who can verify that, who have seen any Turkish soldiers.

-Not involvement on the ground, but the strong political support the constant statements, the very strong backing from a very strong regional power. Has that not been a factor in this?

-Yes. This is a factor, but this factor became very important after the conflict started. Because if you follow the chronology of the conflict, so, this statement started hours after Armenia attacked us and we pushed back. But Turkish political support to Azerbaijan has always been here. It is not just like it happened all of a sudden. It has always been like that. Why the conflict started? I can tell you, because Armenia wanted to disrupt negotiations. They launched an attack on us on 12 July, on the state border, and they entered our territory, we had to push back. And that clash lasted four days. And we stopped after we pushed them back from Azerbaijan and we did not cross the state border. Then in the middle of August, they sent a sabotage group, which crossed the line of contact, and the head of that group was detained, he confessed that they were planning terror acts against civilians. And then they started to shell our cities on the 27th of September, and we had the first victims in the early hours, maybe early minutes among civilians and among our military servicemen. They shelled us with heavy artillery. So, that's how it started. Why it started?

-President, forgive me, because I know you wish to tell us the history. You mentioned the loss of military servicemen. Why is it that you are not releasing figures for your military losses are you concerned that support might wane if people knew how many young men are being killed in this war?

No, not at all. First, we don't have many. If you how to say, look at the scale of the war, and the fact that we had to break those engineering constructions and all those positions which Armenians built for 30 years our losses are minimal losses. Of course, we cannot talk like that because every life of the human being is priceless. But we have much less losses than Armenians because our military capability is much better. And we have modern weapons which allow us to have minimum losses particularly those drones. Because without those drones all those tanks and guns would have killed so many people. So, it is not a reason because we think we will not have public support. On the contrary, those people who live there, close relatives, their sons, their brothers, they ask us not to stop. Can you imagine? I receive thousands of letters every day, thousands of letters, and in no one of those letters I saw that, stop. No. They say, I lost my son, I lost my brother, I lost my husband. Please go until the end. Please go until the end. Because our people have lived in this situation for almost thirty years.

-But that almost sounds President Aliyev like you have nowhere out of this war like you must fight to recover every last inch.

-Yes, that's what I am saying. But at the same time, I said from the very beginning that if Pashinyan, him personally, not his foreign minister, him personally, says Armenia withdraws its troops from Aghdam, from Kalbajar, from Lachin, the three remaining regions which they have to liberate and give us a timetable, we will stop immediately. We don't want to continue this war. We don't want. We want to stop, and what I am saying now I was saying from the very beginning and people who know me, they know that I am a person of my word. What I say, I do. If Pashinyan tells that today, I promise you that we will stop immediately, but he doesn't do it. He doesn't do it. He wants to regain back. He wants to use these ceasefire opportunities to regroup his forces, to mobilize more people. He is now as you said sent a letter to President Putin for military assistance. Thus, admitting his defeat, and if he admits his defeat why he cannot say that he will liberate the territories. These territories do not belong to Armenia. These are our lands. They have to give them back to us. If they don't do it, as I said, we will go until the end. No way to stop.

-Do you know how many civilians have been killed inside Nagorno-Karabakh by the activities of your forces?

-No, we don't know. We heard the official information from Armenian defense ministry. We do not believe this official information.

-They say 45 civilians.

-Yes. I know. 45 or 47. We don't know. I cannot say anything which I don't know. But I think that it is much exaggerated, because we did not attack their villages, we did not attack their cities. We only attacked

-With respect, President Aliyev, there is a documentary, evidence of attacks on their villages and on their cities.

-I did not finish yet. We attacked Khankandi, because Khankandi was full of military installations. So, we had to destroy them.

-Civilian houses have been destroyed.

-It happens sometimes during the war. It happens. We are not so accurate you know, if their artillery is just next to the house. It is not like Ganja when they hit deliberately by ballistic missiles the civilian compounds where there was no in the radius of maybe 20-30 km a military object.

-But are you troubled by reports of civilian loss of life?

-Yes, of course. I regret. I regret that it happened, and I express condolences to all those who lost their relatives. I mean civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. But again, taking into account the scope of conflict, again saying that every life of the person is priceless, still, their losses are very low.

-And this shows that we are not fighting against civilians. Do you know how many civilians they killed during the war of the 90s? Thousands. Thousands.

-There are concerns...

-The Khojaly genocide. They killed 613 innocent people among them 63 children and 106 women only because they were Azerbaijanis. The Khojaly genocide is a well-known documented fact.

-Do you accept that there is a danger now of a humanitarian catastrophe this winter in Nagorno-Karabakh? You are closing in. You could be in a position soon to besiege the area. What is going to be the fate of the civilians inside?

-That's the question not to me but to Pashinyan to stop, and I say how to stop.

-But you could cut them off. If they are cut off by your forces how can they survive?

-We will take care of them. We will take care of them. Absolutely, no doubt about that. We will provide them with everything, with food with water with everything. No doubt about that. And all our, all our military commanders got a direct instruction from me in the first hours of the conflict that civilians must be taken care of. Do you know the story about two elderly persons whom we found in Hadrut? Their relatives, and military they just left them and (went), ran away. So, one lady and one gentleman of almost 90 years old. And we brought them here to Baku. We put them to the hospital, and we surrendered them to Armenia. But do you know what happened? When that old gentleman was already on the border in Gazakh far away from here, Armenians refused to accept him. They said 'he is ill and he will die soon, we don't want him'. You know. That's what they've done and this person under the care of Red Cross was put to the hospital and the lady was surrendered to them and the man, unfortunately, died. That's how we treat civilians. Therefore, those who live in Nagorno-Karabakh now, they can be absolutely sure that we will take care of them and they will live under Azerbaijani umbrella much better.

-But 90 thousand of them approximately have already fled, they don't seem to be comforted by these assurances.

-According to our information, the real population of those who lived in Nagorno-Karabakh was from 60 to 70 thousand people. All those figures are highly exaggerated. Therefore, I doubt that 90 thousand could flee, because maximum 70.

-May I ask you a long-term question President Aliyev? How do you see the future of the South Caucasus how do you see peace coming here? I mean do you ever see a day when there will be peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia?

-Yes, if you ask my position, I think it is possible. But it depends not only on me, it depends only on Armenian side. And during this forty days of war, on several occasions, I said that I wish to see the day when three South Caucasian countries would be working together. As for instance we do with Georgia. Our close strategic partner and friend. Look how many projects we implemented with them. How close our relations are. They are based on historical legacy and they are based on pragmatism on balance of our interests. So why Armenia became isolated? Because of occupation. And if you look at the map for instance, our energy and transportation projects, you will see that they bypass Armenia. The shortest way for us to deliver our resources to the international markets was through Armenia and we offered them that in the 1990s. We said, 'look, liberate the territories let's build the pipeline through Armenian territory, and then entering Nakhchivan and then Turkey, we will then combine the interests of all countries'. We will make all countries of the region in a certain way inter dependent. And that will be a guarantee for peace. They said 'no'. I offered many times through the Minsk Group co-chairs, they can approve it, financial assistance, social programs in Nagorno-Karabakh financing from our budget, if they liberate territories. They said no. I offered autonomy, the highest possible autonomy in the world, I offered to Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenians said no. They said no to everything. So, what happens now is their fault. By the way, the first president who was overthrown by Karabakh clan published an article saying that what Azerbaijanis are offering now to us they will not offer. That was in the middle of 90s.

-And you would accept an autonomous status now for Nagorno-Karabakh.

-Now, I prefer not to talk about that, because now situation on the ground have changed. But I offered this many times and Armenians rejected it.

-So, now what do you want for Nagorno-Karabakh?

-Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan. It will be part of Azerbaijan as any other region of Azerbaijan. If it will depend again on what will be Armenian government's behavior? It is still not too late for them to be reasonable. It is still not too late for them to get more on the negotiation table. Because after we take control of other cities and villages, there will be nothing to talk about. So, they are losing time. And if they behave reasonably, we can work on some forms of self-governance. We are not against it. But they should not violate territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. They should be based on the best practice which European countries, like Italy like Sweden and Finland have between themselves. Why there should be something different? And then of course, the peace will come to the region and I think that, but frankly speaking, with this prime minister of Armenia I don't think that there is any possibility for peace. There must be a change of government in Armenia, reasonable people must come, those people which are not affiliated with bloodshed and military crimes. And then, I think, by joint actions we can create a new format of cooperation in the Southern Caucasus among Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia which used to be in Soviet times. We had friendly relations, we lived together.

-Is there any compromise that you can offer for the sake of peace? Is there anything that you can say now you are prepared to give?

-You know I cannot offer compromise when other side just is not willing to compromise. During these times Armenian prime minister also on several occasions was interviewed by foreign journalists, and he was asked. There was one program Russian TV, they were asking same questions to me and to him. And when I was asked about compromise I said what I am saying to you. When he was asked about compromise three times he said self-determination for Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. But this is not a compromise. What compromise they are ready to do? And by the way, today their opportunities to compromise is shrinking, because we are getting those territories back by force. Our compromise is still on the table. But it is not a 100% sure that it will be on the table if we take all these territories back. Then, what will we talk about? So, for Armenian prime minister for him, for his own sake, the best thing is now to listen to me and to say publicly 'we liberate Aghdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin'. And we stop, and there will be a ceasefire, and if they don't violate it again, and we will come back to those issues which you refer to-status, autonomy, cultural autonomy, community, et cetera. But we can be fair and I always fair with our people. Today situation changed therefore, what I offered to them a year ago, two years ago maybe is not valid. But it is premature to talk about it. Let's see.

-Have you a hope of a peaceful settlement?

-Yes. I have a hope, because my hope is based now on our success on the battlefield. My hope is not based on Armenian constructive position, because what we have seen on the battlefield, what we have seen in Fuzuli, in Jabrayil. We saw that they were not planning to liberate the territories. They were just lying to us, they were lying to co-chairs of the Minsk Group, because they invested so much in these fortifications, that they would have never, never liberated that. It took us a lot of time to take control of Fuzuli because of that. And then, when we were moving by the Araz river towards the state border with Armenia, on several villages there have been very severe clashes and it took us several days to break that defense.

-President Aliyev, I wanted to ask you, if I may, a question on behalf of our Azerbaijan service of BBC and if you would be happy to reply in your own language? I think they would be very happy to have that. What kind of future do you see here for the people of Azerbaijan after this conflict? Some would say here, and I know you disagree but some would say that this is a society which still does not have full freedom, full human rights. Do you see a peace dividend if this conflict finishes? Do you see the society here being able to move on from the Nagorno-Karabakh issue which is so consuming what future do you see here?

-I think that the future of our country will be very bright. We have made great strides in recent years. Today, our country's successes in both political and economic spheres are recognized by international organizations. Great successes have also been achieved in the international arena. Azerbaijan has become a very strong country. All issues within the country are being resolved. Of course, the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will give our country a new lease of life. First of all, people will be able to return to their ancestral lands and visit the graves of their relatives. The Azerbaijani state will definitely

provide them with maximum assistance in this. We will rebuild the occupied lands, build houses, office buildings, schools. Thus, a new era will begin for our country. This new period will usher ample opportunities, and I believe that the positive trends will intensify not only in the economic sphere but also in the field of political relations. Azerbaijan will further enhance its role in the international arena. Respect for Azerbaijan will increase. As a strong state, we are restoring our territorial integrity, we are restoring justice and international law. So I am confident that the future development of our country will be very successful. We have achieved all our goals so far. We have achieved all the goals I have stated. The restoration of our territorial integrity and the return of our lands have been my main tasks as President. I am glad that I have coped with these tasks with dignity, and we are returning to our lands thanks to the support, hard work and courage of the Azerbaijani people. The selflessness of the Azerbaijani people shows once again that we are a great nation, we have demonstrated unity, and this unity will strengthen us even more, will make our country even stronger.

-Great. President Aliyev thank you so much. You have been very generous with your time this morning, and we are very grateful.

-Thank you for your questions.

-Thank you.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

10.11.2020 [14:56]

On November 10, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation. AZERTAC presents the address.

Address of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev

- Dear fellow countrymen.

It is a historic day for our country today. An end is being put to the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict today. I think that the trilateral statement that has just been signed will put a full stop in resolving the issue. The statement has been signed by the President of Azerbaijan, President of Russia and Prime Minister of Armenia. I would like to familiarize you with the text of the statement:

"Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation

We, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan I. H. Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia N. V. Pashinyan and President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin, declare the following:

1. A complete ceasefire and a cessation of all hostilities in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict shall be introduced at 00:00 hours Moscow time on 10 November 2020. The Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, hereinafter referred to as the Parties, shall stop at their current positions.

2. Aghdam district shall be returned to the Republic of Azerbaijan before 20 November 2020.

3. Along the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor, a peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation shall be deployed in the amount of 1,960 military personnel with small arms, 90 armored personnel carriers, 380 units of automobile and special equipment.

4. The peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation shall be deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces. The period of stay of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is 5 years and shall be automatically extended by further five-year periods if none of the Parties declares six months prior to the expiration of the period of its intention to terminate the application of this provision.

5. In order to increase the effectiveness of control over the implementation of the agreements by the Parties to the conflict, a peacekeeping center shall be deployed to exercise control over the ceasefire.

6. The Republic of Armenia shall return Kalbajar district to the Republic of Azerbaijan before 15 November 2020 and Lachin district before 1 December 2020, while retaining the Lachin corridor (5km wide), which shall provide a connection of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and shall not affect the city of Shusha.

By agreement of the Parties, a plan for the construction of a new route along the Lachin corridor shall be determined in the next three years, providing communication between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, with subsequent redeployment of the Russian peacekeeping contingent to protect this route. The Republic of Azerbaijan shall guarantee the safety of citizens, vehicles and goods traveling along the Lachin corridor in both directions.

7. Internally displaced persons and refugees shall return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent districts under the control of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

8. The exchange of prisoners of war and other detainees and bodies of the dead shall be carried out.

9. All economic and transport links in the region shall be restored. The Republic of Armenia guarantees the safety of transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in order to organize unhindered movement of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions. Control over transport shall be exercised by the bodies of the Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of Russia.

By agreement of the Parties, the construction of new transport communications linking the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with the western regions of Azerbaijan shall be provided.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia
President of the Russian Federation.”

XXX

Dear fellow countrymen, dear sisters and brothers.

This statement has historic significance. I must say that this statement has been signed in a videoconference format. At the first stage, the heads of the three states were supposed to sign the statement in this videoconference format. However, at the very last moment, the Armenian prime minister refused. This is somewhat understandable because this statement is actually tantamount to Armenian military capitulation. Therefore, this statement was signed by the President of Russia and myself in a videoconference format. This statement has been prepared in Russian. I have put my signature here, this document was submitted to the Russian Ambassador after the signing and the heads of state and government of Russia and Armenia will sign this document afterwards.

I want to say again that this action of Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan is understandable. However, I think that everyone should be held accountable for what they do. Everyone must have some respect for themselves even in the most difficult and critical situations for themselves and for their country. Pashinyan will sign it anyway. We have forced him to do that. But he will sign it in a closed place, in a locked-up room, far from the cameras, in a cowardly and treacherous manner. He is not signing it of his own free will. He is signing it under pressure from the iron fist!

This statement is our glorious victory. I am glad to be sharing this good news with the people of Azerbaijan today. I think that one of the reasons why this statement has been signed is our brilliant victory, our historic victory, the liberation of Shusha from occupation. Shusha is the crown of Karabakh! The liberation of Shusha has great political and strategic significance, as well as great moral significance. We have returned to Shusha, we have returned Shusha, we will live in Shusha, people will live in all other lands liberated from occupation. People will return to those lands, live there, our people's 30-year longing will come to an end.

I think that the reason for this statement being signed was yet another glorious military victory on 9 November – National Flag Day. Because on 9 November, the Azerbaijani Army liberated 72 settlements from the occupiers. By liberating Shusha, by liberating 72 settlements on 9 November, by liberating about 300 settlements since 27 September, we broke the back of the Armenian army. Pashinyan was forced to sign the statement – in a very pathetic and miserable state. I have signed this statement with great pride and joy because this statement puts an end to the long-standing occupation. This statement allows us the opportunity to return our other occupied regions – Aghdam, Lachin, Kalbajar – without bloodshed. There is a very short deadline, these districts will be returned to us by the end of this month. This is great happiness. I take this opportunity to congratulate the residents of Aghdam, Lachin and Kalbajar districts, all the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion. Every time an occupied district or city was liberated, I congratulated the residents of those cities and districts. I can imagine what it means for them. Some, perhaps many, have lost hope because the issue had not been resolved for many years. Over the past 17 years, I have been in numerous meetings with the IDPs, attended ceremonies to present them with new homes, and I saw that their hopes were diminishing with every passing year. I saw it. I saw it with a sore heart. I saw that some of them had already lost hope. Yes, they expressed their gratitude, of course, we have created good conditions for them and resolved their problems. As you know, the work done for the IDPs in Azerbaijan is not done in any other country. There are IDPs in many countries around the world, but the situation of our IDPs is incomparably better than in other countries. But their main desire has been to return to their native lands, and they asked me, “Mr. President, please return us there”. Every time I met with them, I saw a strong resolve, invincibility, loyalty to the state, but at the same time, I saw grief and longing in their eyes. This is over, my fellow compatriots, may your eyes be clear now, you are going back, we are going back, Azerbaijan is going back! Azerbaijan is restoring its territorial integrity. Could there be a greater happiness?

The IDPs are well aware that we will do our best to help them return to their ancestral lands. We will rebuild these liberated lands. The whole world can see now what the hated enemy has done to these lands. All our buildings have been destroyed, all our historical sites have been destroyed, our museums have been looted, our nature has been severely damaged, our mosques have been destroyed and desecrated. In the

half-destroyed mosques in the liberated lands, the savage enemy kept pigs to insult us and hurt our pride. But we took revenge on them with a vengeance. We have avenged the victims of Khojaly, we have avenged our martyrs.

While announcing the liberation of Shusha to my people on 8 November, I said that I bow to the memory of our martyrs. The martyrs of the First and Second Karabakh Wars will forever live in our hearts. May God have mercy on all our martyrs. As a result of their heroism and self-sacrifice, we will return to our lands. May God heal all our wounded soldiers, may they recover soon and return to normal life, and we will do our best for their recovery. Even our seriously wounded soldiers and officers who are in the most difficult condition should know that we will do our best to bring him back to normality. We all owe this victory to them. They liberated our land from the occupiers piece by piece, they raised our flag in the occupied and liberated lands, they hoisted our flag there. This is a victory for all of us, for all the people of Azerbaijan. The people of Azerbaijan have once again shown what a great nation, what a patriotic nation, what a people with an iron will we are. Thirty years of suffering, 30 years of despair, 30 years of longing did not break our people, did not affect our resolve in a negative way. On the contrary, we have become even more united, even stronger, we said ‘enough is enough’, we will not tolerate this occupation any longer. We said that we would drive the enemy out of our lands! We are not interested in any negotiations. You know very well that over the past year I did not talk about negotiations at all. I did not want to deceive my people, I have never deceived and I will not deceive it. The Azerbaijani people know this. When I said before the war that I knew what to do and when, I am sure that the vast majority of our people understood what I meant and patiently waited for this day, believed in me as President and Commander-in-Chief, believed and waited, and this day has arrived. Enough, this occupation shall end! How much longer will our cities remain under occupation? How much longer will the hated enemy pollute our nature, walk, eat, drink, dance and insult us in our lands? We said that we would show the enemy its place, drive the enemy out of our lands, and we drove them away!

Historians will tell what happened on 27 September. I think many people know how it all started. The patience of the Azerbaijani people had already run out, and I was telling the Armenian prime minister in recent meetings that he should not play with fire, he should not abuse the patience of the Azerbaijani people. You don't know the people of Azerbaijan well enough, you will find out what we are but it will be too late. Come round, get out of these lands, these lands do not belong to you. But what did they do? In order to conduct illegal settlement there, they brought Armenians from abroad to Shusha in a demonstrative manner, in gross violation of international law, international conventions, including the Geneva Conventions, in order to insult us. It was in Shusha that the leader of the gang who is now looking for a hole to hide, the leader of the junta was sworn-in and the prime minister of Armenia attended. Wasn't that intended to annoy us? Did they think that no-one would hold them to account for that? We did, we put them to their knees, they are on their knees now! There is hardly anyone he didn't call over the past 40 days, begging for help and humiliating himself. We have humiliated him and we were absolutely right. When he danced drunk on Jidir Duzu in the holy city of Shusha, he should have thought that this day would come, he would receive his punishment, hide like a mouse, take this document and sign it crying. We showed him his place, we taught him a lesson. We chased them out of our lands like dogs. I said that we would chase them, that we would chase them like dogs, and we chased them, we chased them like dogs. He is now signing this document out of fear, knowing that we will come to Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachin. No-one can stop us. Everyone sees our strength, everyone understands what our iron fist is like. That is why we have driven them out and are perfectly right in doing that.

We have destroyed almost all of their equipment. We have passed the fortifications they had built for 30 years, our soldiers have passed them like lions. They have crushed the enemy, and were perfectly right to do that because they are on their own land. We abide by international law. We respect international law. We did not take revenge on civilians, we will never take revenge on civilians. In fact, this is why there are very few civilian casualties on the enemy side. What did they do? They could not confront us on the battlefield, fled and then fired on civilians with ballistic missiles. This is a war crime. They will be held accountable for this war crime. To hit the city of Ganja with ballistic missiles from Armenia is a disgrace, a despicable act, a crime. It is a war crime to shoot Barda with cluster munitions. I said earlier that the city of Tartar is similar to the city of Stalingrad, which was destroyed during World War II. Every day, hundreds of shells landed there. Even though it is not a big city, not a single one left. But the Armenians fled. Their “invincible” army was destroyed, desertion began, the head of the junta in Nagorno-Karabakh ordered that

whoever ran away would be held accountable. Did any of us run away? It didn't happen! Not a single person! This is what the people of Azerbaijan are! Civilians lost their homes, their property, their loved ones, but kept saying, "Long live the Motherland". Go ahead, go forward! The letters to me say, Commander-in-Chief, go forward! We support you, go forward, don't stop, and so I did, I did not stop.

I gave about 30 interviews during this war. I have probably never given so many interviews in my entire life. Some were wondering why Ilham Aliyev does not give interviews. I thought that I had sufficient opportunities to express my position and often expressed my views on all matters. All my activities are transparent and all my meetings are reported on to the public. I didn't think it necessary. But when it was necessary, I gave about 30 interviews and said in those interviews that we respect international law, we defend international law, we defend justice, and we are implementing UN Security Council resolutions. I said that all our steps were based on the norms and principles of international law, were based on morality, and all our steps were taken in this direction. We took our revenge on the enemy, we took it on the occupier. We have not dealt with and will never deal with civilians. There is no major destruction in the cities where the enemy lives and hides because we did not open fire on civilian facilities. That is the difference between us.

I said after the war started that many, almost all politicians involved in this issue were saying that there was no military solution to this conflict. What was I saying? I said there was! I was criticized. People were asking what Ilham Aliyev was saying. They were saying that there is no military solution. I said if there is not, then solve it peacefully. You have these opportunities in your hands. You are a superpower, you have a great reputation, you have great opportunities. What is Armenia compared to you? Can't you influence it? Or don't you want to put pressure on it? No, they said, it is impossible to wage war and the issue must be resolved peacefully. OK, a peaceful solution may be sought for one year, for two years, but for 30 years? How much longer will you try to fool us? However, we have proved that there is a military solution. And I said what I wanted. I said to Pashinyan, make a statement, make a commitment, provide a timetable, provide a schedule. I have been saying this since the first day of the war. Everyone can see it. In my interviews and in my addresses to the nation, I said openly – provide a timetable, provide a schedule, get out, leave, and I will stop. They were asking us from here and there to stop. But why didn't you tell them to stop when they occupied our lands? Why didn't anyone say to Armenia, which has been occupying our land for 30 years, "get out of there!" What is this? Well, we are now relying on our own strength to liberate these lands by giving martyrs and shedding blood. Why are you telling us to stop and not telling them to get out? No-one says that. They tell us to stop. I said I would not stop. No-one can stop me. I said I demand from you, Pashinyan, you personally, not your foreign minister or anyone else – you must make a personal commitment, you must provide a date by which you will get out of our lands. There is that commitment in this statement. We forced him, we compelled him, we made him assume this commitment by beating him up for all his evil deeds, for keeping those pigs in our mosques. He who keeps pigs in our mosques is a pig himself. Now there is an obligation in this document. He will get out of the rest of the occupied lands by 1 December. Therefore, there is a military option. But as I said, I want this military stage to stop so that we could move on to the political stage. What happened? Exactly what I was saying. That I was saying is coming true today. The military phase is over and we are moving on to the political phase. We have signed a document that favors our interests the most. Pashinyan has signed it. There was no other option. In essence, this is a confession of defeat. This is a military capitulation. In principle, I could ask him to come and sit there, down below, and sign it there. But I am no such person. Why humiliate anyone? He has already humiliated himself. He put himself in this disgraceful situation. He should have thought of today when he put his stomach forward and danced in a drunken state in Jidir Duzu. This is it. No-one can joke with us. No-one can play with the patience of the Azerbaijani people. No-one can insult us. If you do, you will learn a lesson. And we have taught him a lesson.

Therefore, the issue has already been resolved – of course, if Armenia adheres to the ceasefire. I have already given all my orders. I have given my orders to command centers and we will stop. We respect our own signature. The other side must also stop. Because if it doesn't stop, we won't stop either.

International observers know who violated the ceasefire. Who violated it the first time by bombing Ganja with a ballistic missile, who violated the ceasefire the second time less than five minutes after it was declared, and the third time by hitting Barda with cluster missiles. If they break it again, I think they will regret it even more. Therefore, we were able to achieve what we wanted. We were able to force the enemy.

I actually gave them an ultimatum. I said – you must leave, if you don't, I will go to the end. Until the end! On 8 November, I said in the Alley of Martyrs that I would go to the end and no force could stop me.

We won this victory on the battlefield. About 300 settlements, including Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Gubadli, Shusha, Hadrut, Sugovushan and other settlements were liberated on the battlefield.

These victories forced the enemy to return Aghdam, Lachin and Kalbajar districts to us by political means. But it would be wrong to look for any good intentions of the Armenian side here. They have no idea what good intentions are. They were simply forced. Because he knew that if he did not sign this document, we would get these lands ourselves. Everyone knew that. I said that I do not want to shed blood. We must stop the war, so get out of our lands! And this is exactly what happened.

I would like to mention one more issue. I have just acquainted my dear people with the text of the document. A new control mechanism is being applied here. The fifth paragraph of the statement reads: "In order to increase the effectiveness of control over the implementation of the agreements reached by the Parties to the conflict, a peacekeeping center shall be deployed." I can say that Russian and Turkish servicemen will work in this center. Thus, Turkey will officially play a role in the future settlement of the conflict and monitoring the ceasefire.

In my remarks at the signing ceremony in the videoconference format, I praised the efforts of both the President of Turkey, my dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. Because they made truly great efforts during these 44-45 days to resolve the issue peacefully. At the same time, I am very glad that these two leaders have already played a positive role in ending the conflict. I think that it also largely determines the format of future cooperation in the region. Because if we look at the history of relations between Turkey and Russia today, I think they are at the highest level. Both countries are friendly and neighboring countries for us. So I think that this format of cooperation can be even more diverse in the future.

Another important issue I would like to emphasize is that a link is being established between the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the rest of Azerbaijan. The opening of all communications and roads also shows that a new transport and communication infrastructure can and should be created. We have, of course, been very supportive. I can say that this paragraph was included in this statement at my insistence. It has no bearing to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict but I am glad that my requirement was accepted. Thus, a historic step was taken to connect the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with Azerbaijan, with the main part of Azerbaijan by land. The hated enemy besieged Nakhchivan in the early 1990s and shortly before. All communication lines were cut off. At that time, energy resources were transferred there from the main part of Azerbaijan. As a matter of fact, the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic was in a very difficult situation. At the same time, there were attacks from the territory of Armenia. I have said many times that it was thanks to the courage and activities of great leader Heydar Aliyev that Nakhchivan was not occupied. Armenian vandals did have such plans.

Therefore, I would like to emphasize this and congratulate the people of Nakhchivan on this occasion. I must say that the people of Nakhchivan, as indeed residents from all other regions, took an active part in the second Karabakh war. Now the war is over, some issues that have not been disclosed will be revealed, and everyone will know that the people of Nakhchivan, along with servicemen from all other regions, have shown great heroism, selflessness, and became martyrs for the liberation of our lands.

I would like to touch upon one more issue. These days we saw the unity of the Azerbaijani people. Our army received support from all our regions. People in all our regions lived these days with great excitement, watched news from the front on TV, radio, on the Internet every day, rejoiced at our successes. We saw this in all our regions. We were further convinced of how wonderful our country and our people are. Representatives of all nationalities and all religious confessions living in our country showed courage fighting the enemy and restored the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. This is our great asset, a great value. I have said this many times. Armenia is deprived of such happiness because it is a mono-ethnic state, no-one lives there except for the Armenians. In Eurasia, in our region, there is no other country like this because no-one can live there. They are expelled, subjected to ethnic cleansing like the Azerbaijanis, or representatives of another nationalities cannot live there. They are being squeezed out, they are being squeezed out, they are being squeezed out. But our advantage lies precisely in this. A multinational and multi-confessional Azerbaijan has asserted itself in this war, representatives of all peoples have displayed true unity and heroism. I want to say again that this war clarified many issues yet again.

I would like to mention one more issue. You probably noticed that this statement contains not a single word about the status of Nagorno-Karabakh! Where are the demands of the Armenian side that Nagorno-Karabakh should be granted independence? When I offered them autonomy, they did not agree, they said no, it is an “independent state”. For many years, they have been living as an “independent state” and must gain independence from Azerbaijan. Not a word, Pashinyan! What happened? What is it, Pashinyan? This will probably remain the talk of the town for many years. What happened, Pashinyan? You were going to pave a road to Jabrayil. You danced. But where is the status? The status went to hell, it failed, it was scattered to smithereens, it is not and will not be there. As long as I am President, there will be no status. Therefore, this document is of great importance. I am sure that the Azerbaijani people, having shown great attention to this document, will read it in detail, with great attention, and they will see how great a political victory we have won. Our military victory plays an exceptional role in achieving this political victory. Of course, the work carried out in our country in recent years, the excellent atmosphere that has developed, the unity of the people and the government, the achievement of a positive level of political relations, our international authority, our activities in the international arena – all this and, of course, the army building have made our victory possible. These days, I also noticed the following. Even people with different political views, those who are critical of our work and often express unfounded criticism, showed a model of high consciousness during this period. I have always said that there are and should be different views on the political plane, this is normal. There must be opposition, this is also normal. We, as in any democratic country, of course, have all these freedoms. Only one thing should not be there – it is impossible to be in opposition to the state, to the statehood. You can't live with the thought “the worse the government, the state, the better for me”. I can say: these days, I saw that we can all unite in national issues. This is also very important for our future because we all want Azerbaijan to develop and become an even more powerful country. We have demonstrated our strength on the battlefield, on the political plane, in any format. We showed our independence. The day will come, and some issues will probably be revealed that could not be revealed during the war. Perhaps I can also clarify some issues. Then everyone will see what ordeals we had to overcome, how much pressure we came under. We can say that they routinely told us to stop, stop, stop! But we went forward because I felt the support of the people, I saw their confidence in me. Nothing could stop me because I knew we were right. We are restoring our territorial integrity, returning our lands. This war showed the whole world how great the Azerbaijani people are – the unconquered people, the people with iron resolve, the victorious people, our victorious army! We are proud of our people, our army! I am sure that all citizens of Azerbaijan believe that these days and minutes are the happiest in their lives. I am also happy to convey good news and these messages to the Azerbaijani people. I am happy to have signed this historic document. I am happy that we are returning to our homeland, to our native Karabakh, Shusha, which is the crown of Karabakh, and we will always live in these lands! From now on, no-one can move us from these lands!

The expression “Karabakh is Azerbaijan, and exclamation mark” has already become a symbol of our victory. I said it a year ago. I am proud that my statement has already become a national slogan. Today we can say with great pride that Fuzuli is ours, Jabrayil is ours, Zangilan is ours, Gubadli is ours, Aghdam is ours, Lachin is ours, Kalbajar is ours, Shusha is ours, Karabakh is ours, Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Glory to the Azerbaijani people! Long live Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva met with servicemen undergoing treatment at Clinical Medical Center No 1

11.11.2020 [20:05]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Victorious Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva have met with the servicemen undergoing treatment at Clinical Medical Center No 1.

The head of state made a speech at the meeting.

Speech of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev

- Dear servicemen, the Patriotic War is over. Azerbaijan has won a brilliant victory in this war, our lands have been liberated from occupation, we have expelled the occupiers from our lands. I have come to congratulate you personally on this glorious victory, to express my gratitude to you, to express the gratitude of the Azerbaijani people to you for fighting heroically, for your exceptional contribution to expelling the enemy from our lands. You were wounded, you put your lives on the line and showed tremendous courage.

The Second Karabakh War will go down in history as Azerbaijan's glorious victory. All our people have shown unity and solidarity in achieving this victory. All the steps taken were aimed at inflicting crushing blows to the enemy with few losses and in a short period of time so that to force the enemy to leave our lands. Victory on the battlefield also led to victory in the political arena. If we had not won this victory on the battlefield, I do not believe that the occupier would have left the remaining lands. The enemy, which had been trying to occupy our lands for almost 30 years in various ways, wanted to perpetuate this occupation. We could not achieve any results through negotiations. We won this war at the expense of the lives of our martyrs, the courage of our servicemen and the policy of our state. I ask you to remember all our brothers and sisters who were killed in the Great Patriotic War by observing a minute of silence.

May God have mercy on all our martyrs! May God send healing to you! May God send healing to all our wounded soldiers and officers!

This victory will remain in the history of Azerbaijan forever. Both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table, we were able to achieve what we wanted. We were able to liberate the cities of Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Gubadli, Shusha using military force. We raised our flag in those lands, our flag flies there now. Today, the whole world sees what Azerbaijan is capable of doing. Both in the political sphere and in the field of military construction, we gained an advantage from the first days of the war thanks to the professionalism of our servicemen and consistently advanced towards this last goal.

The fighting was fierce, the enemy put up stiff resistance. Let everyone know that the victory achieved over these 44 days was achieved thanks to the professionalism and heroism of our servicemen. The enemy did not want to leave the occupied territories of its own accord, and you, the people who took an active part in these battles, know very well what fortifications they had built there in 30 years. It took great heroism and military professionalism to break through those fortifications and crush those lines of defense. Also, the geography of that region is a fortification in itself. Shusha is an impregnable fortress. Panahali Khan built that city so that he could protect the people of Shusha from the enemy as much as possible. It is a symbol of great professionalism and courage to capture Shusha in a few days with little losses and without causing great damage to the city. The enemy had been making preparations on these lands for 30 years. These preparations show that they did not want to leave our lands voluntarily. If they did, why did they spend so much money on these issues? This shows that during all this time – for about 30 years – the enemy was simply deceiving us, deceiving the mediators that they would leave our lands. This was a lie, and the scene on the battlefield confirms that again. At the same time, the landscape of the liberated lands shows that the enemy lived with hatred for the Azerbaijani people. Otherwise, why would they demolish all the buildings? Almost 99 percent of our liberated territories have been destroyed – residential buildings, schools, hospitals, public buildings, historical sites, graves of our ancestors, mosques. Now we are spreading these images so that everyone can see them in the media. This is savagery and vandalism. This is a war crime. The enemy has committed a war crime, and I have already issued instructions to calculate and record the damage. Groups have already been mobilized and international experts will be invited. With the participation of international experts, the entire material and moral damage

will be calculated, and we will take the enemy, both individuals and collectively, to international courts, they will pay compensation, be held to account. They are already being held to account for their ugly deeds.

We tried to resolve this issue peacefully. In particular, as the head of state I have been working to resolve the issue peacefully for 17 years, and this is the main reason why this issue has taken such a long time to be resolved. International mediators also assured us that this issue could be resolved peacefully. But over the past year, we saw that we were simply being deceived and the peace process was almost paralyzed. The new leadership of Armenia has, in fact, disrupted the process of negotiations with unacceptable and harmful steps and statements and was making no secret of that in recent months. Demonstrative steps were taken to show both us and the whole world that the occupied territories would remain under occupation forever. They published various maps. These maps indicated the borders of the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic", which included all the occupied territories. They changed the names of our historical cities and gave them new ugly names. They changed the names of all our villages. They wanted to erase our historical and cultural heritage. They wanted to bring Armenians from abroad to Shusha and settle them there. As a result of the construction of new communications and roads, they wanted to accelerate that settlement, especially in the regions along the Araz River. Due to financial and political support from the Armenians living abroad, some municipalities in several countries already decided to recognize the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic". What does all this show? All this shows their belief that they could both legitimize the occupation and succeed in promoting the so-called criminal entity in this way. When we saw that they were simply deceiving us, trying to insult us and our holy places, we said our word and I did not hide it. During all this time, for 17 years, I had been saying that if this issue was not resolved peacefully, we would resolve it militarily. Whatever people may say, I still think the same and I am saying the same today. For the past 44 days, I received so many calls and so many signals to stop. I said that I had one condition for the enemy – leave our lands and we will stop. Let him say that he is leaving and we will stop. Let him provide a timetable, a date, and we will stop. But the enemy believed that they could stop our successful attack.

Already after the first weeks they realized that they would not be able to stand in front of us. Therefore, they began to appeal to the international community more actively, asking them international organizations and some countries to stop us. I said that no-one could stop us and that we would go to the end. Pashinyan must accept my conditions and declare that he is leaving specific districts at a specific date, and we have achieved that. The joint statement signed on 10 November was in fact an act of Armenia's peaceful capitulation. Just as after the end of World War II, Hitler's henchmen signed an act of capitulation in front of the military leaders of the allied countries, I also said that Pashinyan must sign an act of capitulation in a live format, in the form of a video conference. But frankly speaking, Russian President Vladimir Putin asked me not to insist on that too much. I thought that Pashinyan was already humiliated enough, was already punished for his ugly deeds, was already on his knees and had already accepted all my conditions. The signed statement also approved a timetable for the withdrawal of the occupying forces from Aghdam, Lachin and Kalbajar districts. I said that I did not object. I told him to sign it wherever he wanted, in a dark room, in a warehouse, far away from the cameras. And that is what happened. All the people of Azerbaijan saw the signing ceremony between myself and President Putin. Pashinyan, where did you sign this document? It doesn't matter much. Because it is impossible to find him now. And no-one can ask Pashinyan where he signed it.

We have once again shown our strength and the unity of our people. We have shown that no force can stand in front of us, no force can turn us away from the right path. You carried out this historic mission – Azerbaijani soldiers, Azerbaijani sergeants, Azerbaijani officers. Of course, we have a strong army and a high level of technical equipment. The whole world has seen what technical capabilities we are using. I can also say that our victories and military operations are being studied all over the world today both in terms of technical capabilities and in terms of operational steps, preparation and implementation of operations. This is a new generation of warfare, which combines planning, technical equipment, application of technology, proper planning and implementation of operations, combat capability and high morale of our servicemen. But as I have said several times, it is not our hardware but our soldiers and officers who have won this victory. They have liberated our lands from the enemy and given this Victory to our people. Therefore, the first heroes of this victory are Azerbaijani soldiers and Azerbaijani officers, and everyone should know that. We have proved that we are a great nation. We have proved that we show solidarity and unity. This unity had already existed in society before, but after this victory it rose to an even higher level.

This unity will allow us the opportunity to revive the liberated lands and return our IDPs to those lands as soon as possible. The Karabakh region, our beautiful historical land, will be reborn, revived and revitalized. Karabakh, an integral part of Azerbaijan and one of the most beautiful corners of our country, will become a real paradise.

It is not too difficult to imagine the feelings of our people. I have been receiving thousands of letters every day during this period. Letters full of joy, full of gratitude, full of pride really touch me. Today, when our TV channels and websites show people who have lived the life of an IDP for many years, their feelings and words, I want to cite the expression they love and say the most. They say, I am no longer a refugee. Do you know what this means? It is a manifestation of perhaps the happiest moments, both in the lives of these people and in the lives of all of us, in my life. They say, I am no longer an IDP. They wanted to get rid of this burden. They wanted to rid themselves of this expression pasted on us by the hated enemy, and this day arrived.

Dear former IDPs, you are not IDPs any longer. I address them in the presence of our heroic soldiers and officers: you are not IDPs any longer, you are going home. We will get you back. Those sitting here, thousands of our soldiers and officers are returning you to your native lands. We, the Azerbaijani state, will do our best to take you back as soon as possible. First of all, of course, security measures must be taken. The hated enemy has planted mines almost everywhere in those areas. Now the mine clearance process must begin. We will now involve international organizations. Because we have limited internal capacity to do this in a short time. First of all, security, then infrastructure, then all other restoration issues will be addressed. At the same time, as you know, during these 44 days, the enemy wanted to avenge its defeat on civilians. As a result, 93 civilians were killed, more than 400 civilians were injured, more than 3,000 buildings were either destroyed, burned or damaged. I have already instructed to send groups to the regions, so the damage is being calculated. All the destroyed houses will be rebuilt at the expense of the state. All the damaged houses will be restored by the state. The lost property of our citizens will be restored, lost livestock will be given to citizens. So our citizens can rest assured that all their lost property will be restored. I promise that the houses to be built for them will be better, of higher quality and more spacious than the previous ones. We will do all that. For us, the well-being and security of our people is the priority issue. But during this period, the most important issue for me was to return our lands, restore our territorial integrity, raise our flag in Shusha, raise our flag in all other occupied lands. We have achieved this!

We are living through historic moments. You can see people celebrate this holiday in the streets. This holiday is celebrated all over Azerbaijan, by all Azerbaijanis around the world. This holiday is celebrated in brotherly Turkey just like here. This is natural. Because we are one nation, two states. These days, I have repeatedly thanked my dear brother, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan. We talked on the phone yesterday. I thanked him again. Turkey's political and moral support played a huge role in achieving this victory. Because the words of the President, my brother from the first hours that "Azerbaijan is not alone, Turkey is with it", stopped the attempts of many to intervene in this conflict. During all this time, the President, ministers and officials have always expressed their support for us. You see how many delegations are coming here. Several delegations come here from Turkey almost every week. The support and solidarity Turkey has shown are highly appreciated by the Azerbaijani people.

Now a new era begins in our lives. This period will usher a happy future for our country. A new era begins in your life. You have been wounded. But you can rest assured that we will heal you. We will bring our most severely wounded servicemen back to life. Our doctors are working around the clock now. After that, all necessary measures will be taken to return you to normal life. As you know, modern prostheses are brought for our servicemen who lost their hands, arms and legs in the First Karabakh War on the personal initiative and under the control of Mehriban Aliyeva. There are the prostheses people can use to play football. All this will be provided. You can be sure of that. Regarding your future life, I want to appeal to all government agencies and private companies already. I state that special steps will be taken to provide jobs for our servicemen, our heroic and wounded servicemen. We will always take this into account.

The problems of martyr families will be resolved. We have almost solved the housing problems of most of the families of our martyrs who were in line. This year, the families of 1,500 martyrs will be provided with houses and apartments by the state. Today, I am instructing all relevant agencies to provide financial support to the relatives of those killed in the Second Karabakh War, the Patriotic War as we call, as soon as possible, and they are being registered now. After accurate registration, they will be provided with apartments and houses.

During all these 44 days, before and after, I will reward our servicemen who have shown heroism on the battlefield and in the rear. Relevant instructions have already been issued. I have already instructed and I want to declare in your presence that new orders and medals will be established in Azerbaijan. These orders and medals will be awarded to servicemen and civilians distinguished in the Patriotic War. I also proposed the names of these orders and medals. I think you and the Azerbaijani people will like these names. I have also instructed that the military equipment of the enemy we have taken as booty be brought to Baku. I asked for a place to be chosen where we will demonstrate this equipment. All people of Azerbaijan will go and see what we have brought back. Some of the destroyed equipment is in such a state that it is impossible to bring it now. But I regularly updated our people on how much of the enemy equipment we had destroyed. In fact, their army has no equipment left, its army is almost non-existent. They have admitted that themselves. They themselves admitted that Azerbaijan had beaten them. So we will demonstrate the military equipment we have taken as booty. I have many plans. Hopefully, we will do it all. We will further strengthen this historic victory in the legal and political spheres. After that, our citizens will live comfortably and return to their homeland. Thanks to you, Azerbaijan will enter a new era.

This is why I came to pay my respects to you today, immediately after the end of the war. I would like to thank your parents for raising such heroic children for the state. I have come to express my personal gratitude and congratulations to you. The first people I congratulate are you and all our heroic warriors in your person. I have come to say that I will always be with you. You can count on me. Our heroic warriors will always be in my spotlight in the future. I congratulate you again, get well soon and return to normal life. Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

X X X

Senior Lieutenant Mail Asgarov: I completed my active military service as an officer and was released into reserve. When partial mobilization was announced by your order, I also returned to military service, and we fought with the enemy in the direction of Fuzuli district where I was wounded. I am very proud that my comrades did not leave our mission unfinished and won.

At the hospital where I was treated after my injury, we were looking forward to your speeches on the liberation of our lands from occupation. One of the most important speeches for us was the news of the tricolor flag being raised in Shusha, the cradle of Azerbaijani culture. You granted it to us. I would like to express my special gratitude to you for that.

In your last speech, or rather in your latest speech, you addressed the people and said that we defeated the enemy like an iron fist. I would describe it in such a way that this iron fist represents the unity of our people, the solidarity of our people, the strength of our army and, in particular, the great confidence of the people in you. So I say this as someone who is among the people, it is the great confidence people have in you. This ensured our victory. We crushed the enemy with that fist.

We express our endless gratitude to you for giving us this Victory, this joy, this triumph. I take this opportunity to congratulate you and you, Mehriban khanim, on this victory. Thank you very much.

President Ilham Aliyev: Thank you very much. We have been waiting for this victory for a long time. Our people deserve this victory. Our people are a victorious people. Thank you, guys.

AZERTAC

President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

20.11.2020 [12:02]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has addressed the nation.
AZERTAC presents the address.

Address of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev

Dear fellow countrymen,

I sincerely congratulate you on the liberation of Aghdam district. I heartily congratulate all the people of Aghdam. Dear people of Aghdam, you are no longer IDPs. You will return to your ancestral land.

The liberation of Aghdam district is the result of a trilateral statement signed on 10 November. I have repeatedly said that the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is possible both politically and militarily. We have been trying to resolve this issue politically for many years. However, the whole world saw that this issue was not resolved due to the position of Armenia, and it was our legal right to resolve the issue by military means. This right is recognized by international norms and principles. This right is given to us by the UN Charter. Every country can defend itself, and we have defended ourselves.

The liberation of Aghdam district is a historic event. I can say that Aghdam is the largest of the occupied districts in terms of population. Before the occupation, 143,000 people lived in Aghdam district. At present, the population of Aghdam district is 204,000 people. 73 percent of the district was occupied, and in the remaining areas, the areas under our control, we have carried out major construction and landscaping work in recent years. We gave Guzanli village the status of a settlement and made Guzanli the center of Aghdam district. Social facilities, infrastructure and industrial enterprises have been established in Guzanli on my instruction. Jobs have been created for our people. Guzanli was supplied with natural gas, all other infrastructure projects were implemented there, a large Olympic Sports Center, a hospital, schools and a Mugham Center were built. I personally attended the opening of all these facilities. I must also say that 18 IDP camps have been built in the part of Aghdam district that was under our control on my instructions in recent years, and we have been able to accommodate 93,000 IDPs in Aghdam district. Due to the work done and major investments made, 45 percent of the population of Aghdam district lives in the territory of Aghdam district today.

A new era begins for Aghdam now. We have major plans. Everything in the occupied territories is destroyed. My visits to Fuzuli and Jabrayil were covered in the media, and everyone, the whole world could see what a savage enemy we are facing. There is not a single sound building left in Jabrayil or Fuzuli, only some military units and buildings belonging to the military units. All the remaining infrastructure, all buildings, houses, historical monuments, religious sites have been destroyed by the savage enemy.

I addressed the people of Azerbaijan from those ruins and said that we would restore these lands, these cities and these villages. The Armenians believed that the Azerbaijani people would never return to these lands after this devastation. They were wrong. They do not know that native lands live and will live forever in the hearts of the Azerbaijani people, in the heart of all our people. All our refugees lived with a desire to return to their native lands and build a new life for themselves with the support and assistance of the state.

We will also restore the city of Aghdam. Of course, we must do everything in a comprehensive manner. A master plan will be prepared, specialists will be involved, infrastructure projects will be implemented in a planned manner, office buildings, social facilities, roads and other necessary work will be carried out. The state will help citizens to return there. Therefore, the restoration of Aghdam district will have a special place in our future plans because it is a large district in terms of territory and, at the same time, as I said, it is the largest district in terms of population.

As a matter of fact, our restoration work has already begun. During my visit to Fuzuli, all relevant instructions were given on the construction of a new road from Fuzuli to Shusha, funds were allocated from the President's contingency fund – initially 50 million manats. But these funds will not be sufficient. Additional funds will be allocated next year. According to my instructions, the Ahmadbayli-Alkhanli-Fuzuli-Shusha road is divided into several parts. I have instructed to involve several companies so that we

can build this road without wasting time and in a short time. The people of Azerbaijan know that the road to Shusha used to be the Aghdam-Khankandi road, but it is not possible to use this road yet. However, the trilateral statement signed on 10 November states that all communications will be opened, including the Aghdam-Khankandi-Shusha highway, which will be opened after some time. I believe that the opening of communications, as well as the roads and communications connecting the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the rest of Azerbaijan, will also contribute to long-term peace in the region in the future.

These issues will be resolved in a planned manner. We started the first major project. In the same manner, we will take consistent steps to restore the city of Aghdam and all its infrastructure. The people of Aghdam and all the other districts liberated from occupation can rest assured that the Azerbaijani state will always stand by them.

The liberation of Aghdam was possible as a result of the glorious military victory. If Azerbaijan had not defeated Armenia on the battlefield, Armenia would not have left our lands of its own free will. There are many reasons for this. First of all, because of the fortifications they had built in those regions, in the occupied territories. A lot of money was invested there. Those fortifications were intended to prevent the Azerbaijani Army from passing through them. But they were wrong again. They could not calculate our strength correctly. They did not know what the Azerbaijani Army and Azerbaijani citizens were capable of doing. They did not know that it was our strength, equipment and morale that led us to that Victory. They did not know that the people of Azerbaijan have been living with the desire to return to their ancestral lands for all these years. All these and other factors paved the way for our Victory.

Therefore, by building these fortifications and taking other steps, they pursued the goal of perpetuating this occupation. Otherwise, they would not have changed the names of our historical cities and villages. Aghdam was given an ugly name, Fuzuli was given another ugly name. They drew up new maps, in which the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic" covered not only the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region but also all the occupied territories, and they presented this to the international community.

I have repeatedly told the mediators dealing with this issue to pay attention to that. You are talking about a peaceful solution to this issue but we see the exact opposite. We see that the heritage of Azerbaijan is being erased in these lands, Azerbaijani monuments and historical sites are being Armenianized, Azerbaijani mosques are being destroyed, all our historical and cultural heritage is being erased, new maps are being drawn up. When maps of the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh republic" are published in textbooks prepared for Armenian schools, all the lands occupied are attributed to this self-styled entity. Books and booklets published by Armenia in foreign languages cover all the occupied territories and the so-called entity. They do the same when illegally participating in international exhibitions. Okay, but what next? You are saying that the issue will be resolved peacefully.

What happened to these maps now? These maps have gone to hell, these maps no longer exist. The occupiers vacating Kalbajar district are destroying all houses, buildings, schools, and showing their savagery yet again. All leading international media outlets have filmed this and spread these images around the world, embarrassing them. They are putting themselves to disgrace. They cowardly ran away from us. They could not stand in front of us. Those who call themselves an invincible army, a warlike people – what happened to your warlike army? Where is it? It has been crushed, we have crushed it, we have destroyed it. There is no Armenian army. We have destroyed it. Our victory on the battlefield also preconditioned our political victory. Aghdam district returns to us without firing a single shot or killing a single person. This is our great political success. But this would not have been possible without the military victory.

The people of Aghdam fought heroically in the First Karabakh War and many were martyred. They fought bravely in the Second Karabakh War, the Patriotic War, and there were martyrs. I would like to take this opportunity to pay a tribute of respect to all the martyrs who gave us this Victory. May God have mercy on them and grant patience to their relatives. Addressing the parents and relatives of our martyrs, I once again express my gratitude to them for raising such wonderful and brave children for our state and our people. I wish our wounded soldiers and officers a speedy recovery and return to normal life. May God send them healing. An action plan is being prepared for their rehabilitation and relevant instructions have been issued. They will always be in the spotlight.

Thus, the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is already in the past, as also acknowledged by international experts. Azerbaijan has achieved a brilliant victory on the battlefield and in the political arena. Measures will be taken to improve these lands. First of all, mine clearance work should

be carried out. This is also a time-consuming issue. Because the hated enemy has mined large areas of land. After that, work on infrastructure projects should be undertaken. Instructions have already been issued to analyze the existing infrastructure. We now have satellite and other capabilities. When I visited Fuzuli and Jabrayil districts, I used a new road built in a short time. It is a temporary road, but it is usable. In other words, we will do all this work, and our great return plan is being developed now.

As for the war, I must say again that Azerbaijani soldiers and officers showed true heroism. However, the number of deserters from the Armenian army exceeds 10,000 people. They are saying this themselves, their officials are saying that there were more than 10,000 deserters. This shows again what army is invincible and what army is a heroic army. Their army, in fact, that gang of their could only fight against civilians. The Khojaly executioners and other killers who burned our villages, killed our people and civilians cannot be considered servicemen. Their army consists of thieves. So many bent Armenian generals have been arrested in the last two years! The generals who sell soldiers' stew are thieves. Their "heroes" are cowards and their leaders are criminals. The Armenian leadership itself says that for 20 years, from 1998 to 2018, the country was governed by bandits, thieves, cowards and deserters. Who has led it for the last two and a half years? The whole world can see that. So what name can one give to this country? Only one name – a failed state. What is the cause of this failure? Occupation! I have said this many times. Everyone can look up my speeches and interviews. I said that this occupation would lead Armenia to the abyss. I said that we would never come to terms with this occupation and return our lands sooner or later. But Armenia will waste a historic opportunity. Armenia has not been able to become an independent country for nearly 30 years. It is not independent today either. Armenia is in fact a colony. Was this the dream of the Armenian people? Was this their expectation? Why couldn't they become an independent country? Because of the occupation! What did they gain from the occupation? Nothing! They were disgraced in the political sphere, in all international organizations, we worked hard to disgrace them. Decisions and resolutions meeting our interests and based on international law were adopted. They were defeated on the battlefield and humiliated in front of the whole world. After that, they will have to live with this mark, with the mark of a "defeated country". They lived in Baku, Ganja, in all our cities and districts. Did they have any problems? No! They lost that. They had to leave here, having expelled our people and pursued a policy of ethnic cleansing. What did they gain? Nothing! And now, in this humiliated state, they are biting each other and destroying what little is left of their statehood. I told them to come to their senses and stop this occupation. As long as this occupation continues, Armenia will not be able to develop. Politically dependent, militarily dependent and economically incomplete. They have developed a very harmful ideological basis. Their ideology is based on lies, historical falsifications and the past. How can a country that cannot give up the falsified past move forward? Look how many wars there have been in the world. Take the last 100 years, 200 years. So many people have died in these wars. But who has lived with this enmity, who has lived with hatred in their hearts for years? Who has raised their children in the spirit of hatred? This is their future and this is their reality. The Soviet Union lost tens of millions of people during the war with Germany, but 10 or 20 years later, there was peace. The relations between Russia and Germany are now developing normally. European countries too. How many wars did France wage with Italy? How many wars did Germany and France wage? The people of what country, as they say, keep this hatred simmering in their hearts? This is what has brought Armenia to its current state. They themselves are guilty of all their troubles. On the other hand, how can a country that cannot establish normal relations with its neighbors develop? They are putting forward territorial claims against Turkey. They have no mind. It is suicidal to make territorial claims against a large country like Turkey.

The territorial claims against Azerbaijan. They were able to materialize these claims only for some time, occupied our lands and expelled the neighboring people from their homes. They thought they were right and created a false history. They now seek help from all other countries, as if the whole world owes them. You are an independent country, so live as an independent country. If you can't live as an independent country, then become part of another country. Take that flag off the pole, fold it, put it in your pocket, go and live in another country. They themselves are the cause of their own troubles. This blow we have dealt to them, these events that have befallen them will awaken them perhaps, so that they can live as a normal country, if they make the right choice and if they normalize relations with their neighbors.

Why am I talking about this? Because we live in this region and in this neighborhood, whether we like it or not. As President and Commander-in-Chief, I am interested in ending hostilities in our region, in the South Caucasus, and establishing normal and businesslike relations. At least this is what we want. I said

during the war and I repeat: we have no problems with the Armenian people. We did not carry out ethnic cleansing of the Armenian people, as they did against us. We have not destroyed their historical monuments, we are protecting them, and as you know, we have taken important steps in this regard.

We did not destroy their cities, although we could have done that. It wasn't too difficult to destroy Khankandi after taking Shusha. We could have destroyed in a day. Did we do that? No! But what did they do to our cities? Therefore, we have no problems with the Armenian people. I want to say again that all peoples living in a single Azerbaijani state have equal rights, including the Armenian people. Thousands of Armenians live in Azerbaijan. Is there anyone in our country who says a word to them? No! They live normally as Azerbaijani citizens. I am sure that the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh today will one day realize that the only way for them is to live side by side with the people of Azerbaijan, to live in the neighborhood and to give up all these ugly deeds.

As for yet another fabrication made by Armenia today, I want to clarify that as well. It is claimed that 90,000 Armenians fled Nagorno-Karabakh and became refugees. It is a lie. A maximum of 60,000-65,000 people lived in Nagorno-Karabakh and our occupied lands before the Second Karabakh War. Where did we learn that? We have operational information. We have many sources of information in that region, and this is one of the reasons for our success. We knew exactly and we know what is happening there now, where the head of their junta is hiding. He was probably aware too that we knew that. This is why he couldn't take his nose out and sat in the bunker. We have objective information, we have sources, we have satellite images. Therefore, I say with full confidence that a maximum of 65,000 people lived in Nagorno-Karabakh, including the occupied territories. So where did 90,000 refugees come from? Another lie, another fraud. Now they will cling to others, asking and begging for help. "Help me" is the core principle of their ideology. What nation can develop with this ideology? Who has ever benefited from expecting and begging, and then taking offence and putting forward demands?

We will expose these lies about the number of refugees, and even if there were refugees, it is not our fault. We did not fight against the civilian population. They are the ones who fought against our civilian population. We have 94 martyrs among civilians and more than 400 wounded civilians. More than 3,000 houses have been destroyed. Their losses among civilians are much lower. However, they targeted our civilians in cities and villages. Ganja was hit by ballistic missiles. They hit Barda with cluster bombs, with phosphorus bombs. This is a war crime. The city of Tartar is almost destroyed. The largest number of shells fell on Tartar. Every morning, I was told how many shells landed there. One day, two thousand shells fell on a small town. Isn't this Armenian savagery? Isn't it a repeat of the Khojaly genocide? See who we were faced with and who we defeated? I repeat: we have not only restored our territorial integrity, we have also broken the back of Armenian fascism. We have saved the region from Armenian fascism, we have saved the world from Armenian fascism. It may resurrect but we will not allow that to happen. Everyone should know that. We will take any steps necessary to defend ourselves. We will take any steps necessary to protect our citizens, and no-one can stop us. The whole world saw that in 44 days. No-one can stand in front of us or put forward conditions to us. In the early days of the war, representatives of the countries that wanted to impose conditions on us, to threaten us, to slander us, some Western countries – they received our harsh response. They saw that we were not a country that bows to others. Neither am I a leader who accepts everything, any word. I have responded to them with a vengeance and will continue to do so if necessary. Therefore, if Armenian fascism rises again, if any provocation is committed against us, they will receive 10 times more and no-one can stop us.

The current geographical situation in the Karabakh region, of course, has greatly increased our capabilities. Just look at the map, let everyone see who has what opportunities. That is why I want to say it again. There is an internal crisis in Armenia now. This is natural. Because a military defeat, such a shameful defeat can, of course, lead to turmoil in any country. Therefore, if sober-minded forces come to power in Armenia now, after the crisis, we are ready to establish normal relations with such sound forces. But we have nothing to do with the executioners, those who shed the blood of the Azerbaijani people. Let everyone know that! After that, of course, Azerbaijan's opportunities in this region will expand, including the opportunities for influence. But our opportunities are meant only for cooperation. All the work we have done in this region so far has given impetus to cooperation. All our projects – energy, transport and humanitarian projects – have deepened cooperation. We have not taken a single wrong step. For example, we have not taken a single step that could cause any problems for our neighbors. Therefore, our relations with neighboring countries are normal and good. I can actually say that they can serve as an example for

many. What are Armenia's relations with its neighbors like? There was this occupation with Azerbaijan, territorial claims against Turkey. Russia is dissatisfied, so to speak. I know why they could not bring weapons through Iran - because Iran is our friendly and brotherly country and because it closed its airspace on our request. Because they did not want Armenia to kill Azerbaijanis. They are making the same claims to Georgia now because Georgia also closed its airspace during the war and did not allow for the transportation of weapons by land. They also did not want the savage enemy to kill our civilians either. They claim that Russia did not help them. In his interview, the Russian President gave quite clear and accurate information and expressed his position. Azerbaijan was waging war on its territory recognized by international law. Therefore, there can be no talk of an interference of some allied relations. They criticize everyone. They are dissatisfied with everyone. How can one live with such a mindset?

From now on, we will move even faster along the path of development. We have achieved what we wanted on the battlefield. Our soldiers and officers showed their strength. We have shown our strength in the political sphere, and the trilateral statement fully meets our interests. This is why this statement was signed in front of the eyes of the whole world, by the President of Russia and myself. It is still impossible to say where the Armenian prime minister signed it. But that doesn't matter much. It doesn't matter if it happened in a warehouse, a locked-up room or a bunker in which he lives. His signature is there. It is, in fact, an act of capitulation. This is the Victory of Azerbaijan, the return of our lands and the raising of our flag. Fizuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Gubadli, Hadrut, Sugovushan, Murov Mountain and Shusha were liberated from the occupiers on the battlefield, including several villages of Lachin district and a part of Kalbajar district. This is what conditioned our victory. Our victory has already created big problems in Armenia. But look at the reaction of international organizations. Is there a reaction? No! Every day an opposition leader gets arrested in Armenia in a completely unfounded manner. Has any Western country reacted to this? No! Did they condemn it? No! Leaders of major opposition parties have been arrested, but no-one speaks up. Where are you, the Council of Europe? Where is the Council of Europe, which despises Azerbaijan and tries to discredit us? Why are you tight-lipped? Or the monitoring committee. Several rapporteurs for Azerbaijan have been appointed there. Armenia must be monitored. Why are you silent, the Council of Europe? Where are your leaders, where is your monitoring committee, where is the political committee? Don't you see that there are repressions in Armenia? Can't you see that the dictator is doing whatever he pleases? In fact, a defeated dictator, a humiliated dictator. So why don't you speak up? Where is your democracy, where are your human rights? Is there an answer? No! And there won't be one. Even after my words, there will be none. They will cover it up, hush it up. The European Parliament has adopted more than 10 ugly and false resolutions against Azerbaijan. Why are you silent, the European Parliament? You consider yourself the center of democracy in the world. Speak up, make a statement, make a statement and condemn this. A dictator destroys all the opposition right in front of everyone in the world. He kills a man. One of the persons who occupied the parliament has already been found dead. Why don't you speak up? Why? Non-governmental organizations which regularly campaign against us, why are you silent, why don't you speak up? When we were hit with a ballistic missile, you were silent, when we were hit with cluster munitions and phosphorus bombs, you remained tight-lipped. Great countries, countries that claim to European leaders, why are you silent? Tell me, answer me! But it turns out that anyone can come and lecture us here. I am answering all of them, all of them, and with a vengeance.

Sitting in a bunker, the Armenian dictator has completely isolated himself and his nation from the world, while in Azerbaijan there is a unity of the people and the government. This is the difference. This is our strength. Our strength is in our unity. Strength and unity. The people of Azerbaijan probably remember me saying repeatedly in the last three to four years that the world is changing, relations are changing, international law does not work, the factor of strength comes to the fore, the principle of "might is right" prevails. All this can be seen in my speeches. Because I correctly analyze the international situation. I do not want to say that we should follow this path. No. Our path is the path of justice and international law. We have not done anything outside of international law. But I said that the factor of strength comes to the fore, and we must be ready for that. Preparations were going on for all these years, both in the economic sphere and in the field of international relations, first of all, in the field of army building. We gathered strength, hit at the right moment and caved the enemy's head. We crushed it so hard that they will remember this forever. We left a mark on their head. The Azerbaijani people are a victorious people. The Azerbaijani Army is a victorious army. We have won the war on the battlefield, we have won politically and we have liberated our lands from occupiers.

Today, I am proud to share the news of the liberation of Aghdam with my people, to share this great news. I am sure that the days we are living through, these moments will remain in the memory of every Azerbaijani forever. We are writing history, new history. We are writing a new glorious history of our people, our country. This is a history of Victory. But most importantly, we must ensure the return of our citizens to the liberated lands. We must mobilize all our resources. We must mobilize all our financial resources to return our citizens to their native lands as soon as possible.

Dear people, dear people of Aghdam, I would like to sincerely congratulate you once on this wonderful and historic occasion again. I wish you good health and happiness. Aghdam is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

25.11.2020 [12:05]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has addressed the nation.
AZERTAC presents the address.

Address of President Ilham Aliyev to the nation

- Dear fellow countrymen. Kalbajar district has been liberated from occupation today. I heartily congratulate all the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion.

Dear people of Kalbajar, let your eyes be clear! Your native district has been liberated from occupation. The people of Azerbaijan have been looking forward to this day for years. Kalbajar district was occupied on 2 April 1993. Innocent people were savagely expelled from their ancestral lands. The historical sites and nature of Kalbajar have been severely damaged.

The occupation of Kalbajar district was a great tragedy. The occupation of each district was a great tragedy. After the occupation of Shusha and Lachin districts in May 1992, the occupation of Kalbajar also created a geographical link between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Everyone knows that the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region did not have a border with the Republic of Armenia. Armenia was separated from Nagorno-Karabakh by Lachin district and the Lachin corridor. The occupation of Lachin, Shusha and then Kalbajar districts created a geographical connection between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh over a large area, and this was the enemy's goal. After the occupation of Kalbajar, it is possible to say that communication was established between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in many ways. First of all, weapons, equipment and manpower were sent there from Armenia. At the same time, it provided great advantages for Armenia's subsequent policy of aggression.

The occupation of Kalbajar district is the direct responsibility of the then ruling Popular Front of Azerbaijan. In general, the main culprit in the occupation of our lands is the Popular Front of Azerbaijan. Because if they had not come to power illegally in 1992, if they had not staged a coup, perhaps our lands would not have been occupied. Of course, it is very difficult to go back in history and say what could and could not have happened. But in any case, they have played a direct role in the occupation of our lands, and they bear this responsibility. Because in the spring of 1992, the struggle for power reached its peak. There were internal conflicts in Azerbaijan, chaos, crisis, a political crisis, and the struggle for power led to very serious consequences. Armenia continued to take advantage of this to occupy our lands. After the occupation of Shusha and Lachin, the situation reached a critical level. Taking advantage of this, the Popular Front of Azerbaijan came to power as a result of a coup. But what happened after that? After that, they focused all their efforts on strengthening the weakened government, organizing persecutions in our country, applying censorship and taking other anti-democratic steps. Our lands were under occupation, our civilian population was expelled from their ancestral lands, but the Popular Front of Azerbaijan and its leadership had only one goal – to fill their pockets, appoint their relatives and prolong the life of their government. The occupation of Kalbajar was the result of these ugly steps. It could not have been otherwise. The younger generation may not remember this, but they should know who was leading Azerbaijan at that time, people of what knowledge and what skills were leading Azerbaijan. Those people had no experience. Those people – the people who were represented in the government at the time, the people who held high positions – had never led a single department, not a single small enterprise. How could they run the country, especially in a crisis? But their yearning for power, their greed, their appetite and avarice led to this situation in Azerbaijan. Look who governed Azerbaijan at the time?! The speaker of parliament was a junior researcher, in fact, a failed researcher. The secretary of state was a careerist from the Komsomol who had betrayed his leader at a later stage, set his eyes for his post, rejoiced in his death more than anyone else, and lived his entire life under the control of foreign circles. What kind of management would you expect from them? What kind of patriotism would you expect from them? What professionalism would you expect? The minister of foreign affairs was a random person who couldn't speak any foreign language, a physics teacher, someone who had no idea at all what foreign relations are, what international norms and principles are. He simply walked around like a tourist and said what he wanted to say. The minister of defense was a math teacher. Can a math teacher be a defense minister? It was this math teacher who handed Shusha over to the

enemy. He said that if Shusha was lost, he would shoot himself in the head. It is still hanging around here and there. We have returned Shusha, we did! You sold it, traitors. The minister of internal affairs – there were widespread robberies, journalists were getting arrested, beaten up and thrown into the trunks of cars during live broadcasts. Such were the leaders of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan. The prime minister was a junior researcher on scientific communism. Look at these contrasts. The man responsible for advancing the country's economy on the principles of a market economy was a junior researcher on scientific communism. What kind of governance, what kind of reforms, what kind of defense could you expect? Our grief and tragedy is that random people came to power, usurped power and took our country into the abyss.

If Heydar Aliyev had not come to power at the request of the people in 1993, Azerbaijan would not only have lost the remaining lands, but would have also lost its statehood in general. They started a civil war to maintain their weakened government. They took our own soldiers prisoner. They bombed Ganja. Let no-one forget that! Those unaware should know this, the younger generation should know who caused us this trouble. Who is to blame for this tragedy? Who is to blame for the plight of a million people? The government of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan at that time. In fact, if we were to draw comparisons now, their collective image is like that of Pashinyan – incompetent, not knowledgeable, weak-willed, cowardly, deserter, inexperienced in management, influenced by foreign circles, ruled by them and destroying their own country. Look, they are all like Pashinyan. Those who do not know them should look at Pashinyan if they want to get an idea about them. Let them look at his steps and see the image of the then Popular Front of Azerbaijan and the country's leadership.

Kalbajar is our ancient land. It is the land of ancient Azerbaijan. Kalbajar is one of our largest districts in terms of territory. The historical sites of Kalbajar are our great asset. Both mosques and churches are our historical treasures. The people of Azerbaijan know this well, and the whole world should know that churches in Kalbajar belong to the ancient state of Caucasian Albania. There are many historical documents confirming this. This is no secret. Armenian "historians" and fraudsters have simply Armenianized ancient Albanian churches, added their own inscriptions on them and appropriated these churches. Suffice it to look at history and anyone can see that in the 1830s, Tsarist Russia abolished the Albanian Church, gave all the property of the Albanian Church to the Armenian Gregorian Church, and Armenian priests and their patrons began to appropriate these churches. Their main task was to erase the history of Caucasian Albania. But we did not allow that to happen. Azerbaijan has a broad scientific base on this issue. There are research works available. These works are and should be shared not only with the scientific community, but also with the world community as a whole. Caucasian Albania was a great state. Gabala was its capital. Historical sites and churches belonging to Caucasian Albania are our historical and cultural heritage. We are protecting these churches. I have visited these churches many times – in the city of Shaki, in Gabala district, the Udi church. As you know, during the war, on the initiative of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, the repairs of the ancient Udi Caucasian Albanian Church in Nij settlement was completed and this church was opened. We are protecting these churches as our cultural heritage. Therefore, no-one should be worried. These churches will continue to be protected by the state. Azerbaijan's policy on multiculturalism and inter-religious relations is praised by the whole world and world leaders. Let certain Western circles who want to express their concern look at our destroyed mosques, the Aghdam, Shusha, Zangilan, Jabrayil, Fuzuli and other mosques. These mosques have either been destroyed or desecrated – pigs were kept in them. Why isn't this causing concern? Why has no-one raised this issue for 30 years except for us? I have repeatedly raised this issue from international forums and in contacts with my foreign colleagues. Why wasn't anyone worried about that? Why didn't anyone want to send an international delegation on this issue? The Azerbaijani people want answers to these questions. We know the answer. Therefore, I want to say again that those who want to interfere in our work or to accuse us of something should first of all look in the mirror.

Kalbajar district has fascinating nature and diverse cultural heritage. Several of our large rivers originate in Kalbajar district. The largest of them is the Tartar River, which is 200 kilometers long. There are also the Bazarchay and Khachinchay. Their length is about 200 kilometers. These rivers feed a large area. But the hated enemy deprived us of these opportunities because the Tartar River flows into the Sarsang water reservoir built on the initiative of great leader Heydar Aliyev in the 1970s. The Sarsang water reservoir was built to provide irrigation to 6-7 districts of the Aran zone of Karabakh at the time. At that time, after the construction of the Sarsang water reservoir, 100,000 hectares of land that had never been irrigated started receiving water. Aghdam, Goranboy, Yevlakh, Barda, Tartar and other districts were irrigated from there. The hated enemy cut off water supply. It cut off water supply in the summer and

released it in the winter, thus flooding the lands. There was also environmental terror against us. Armenia is a terrorist state, and there are many signs of this terror. There are signs of the destruction of our historical sites, the genocide against our civilian population, deforestation, changing the course of our rivers and other signs. The water of the Tartar River, which originated from Kalbajar, was first collected in the Sarsang water reservoir and then in the Sugovushan water reservoir, thus serving the interests of the occupier, whereas we did not get water at all. After we took over the Sugovushan settlement, water supply was resumed and is now expected to provide water to 100,000 hectares.

There are large forest areas in Kalbajar district. There are 24,000 hectares of forest in Kalbajar district. This is our great asset. The hated enemy cut down, looted and sold these trees. Look at the ugly things they have been doing in recent days, burning forests to create an environmental catastrophe. These thieves cut down forests and take them to Armenia for sale. They burn down houses they did not build. They entered the houses of the people of Kalbajar, broke into them and lived there. They burn down schools and kill pets they can't take with them. See who we were facing, what savages we were facing! I repeat, and I will say this every time that our victory is not only a victory over the Armenian state. We have also destroyed Armenian fascism.

We will restore Kalbajar, let no-one have any doubts about that, and life will return there. Agriculture will develop in Kalbajar, especially livestock breeding. We have large pastures there. Kalbajar has ample natural resources. The enemy has brutally exploited these resources. In Soviet times, Istisu water, which was popular throughout the Soviet Union, was produced in Kalbajar. Istisu is under our control again now. It used to be a big resort. The hated enemy has destroyed everything. There are images of that and everyone can see them. We will restore all of that, we will rebuild Kalbajar, the villages, the city of Kalbajar. I have ordered to prepare a master plan for the reconstruction of the city – not only in the city of Kalbajar but also in all other cities, and life will return there.

In Kalbajar, the hated enemy committed another crime and conducted illegal settlement. People from Armenia and foreign countries have settled there illegally. This is a war crime, a war crime under the Geneva Convention. We will hold the enemy accountable. They will answer for all the war crimes, for all this destruction. When I was in Aghdam, I could not find a single safe building. The same applies to Fuzuli and Jabrayil. They have destroyed everything, as if a savage tribe had passed through.

But, for our part, will build and create. We will revive these cities and districts. We have major plans on the restoration of these lands. These plans are already being implemented, infrastructure projects are being implemented. The construction of a new road to Shusha has already begun. In Soviet times, there was one road Shusha – from Aghdam to Khankandi and from there to Shusha. We are now building a new road from Fuzuli district. This road will pass through a part of Khojavand district. I have ordered to do this as soon as possible. However, this is a huge task, there was no road there before and a new road is being built through forests. There are ravines, hills and the terrain is very difficult. But we will do it. We will restore the railways. In particular, preliminary instructions have already been given in connection with the restoration of the railway to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Tangible steps have already been taken to restore the Barda-Aghdam railway. This road is a must for the restoration of Aghdam district and for the comfort of the people who will live there in the future. So all this work will be carried out in a planned manner and the people of Azerbaijan will be regularly updated about the work to be done. We must do all the work in a planned manner. I want to say again: first of all, all the damage will be calculated with the participation of international experts. Then lawsuits will be filed. Then comes the reconstruction of our cities and villages on the basis of master plans. The necessary measures related to agriculture, other infrastructure projects, water and electricity will be taken. Then come roads. When we drove the enemy out of Shusha, it destroyed the water line feeding the city. There is no water in Shusha now. This is what the enemy is like.

When our soldiers saw that the Armenian population of one village of Aghdam district could not leave on time, they created conditions for them to leave. No-one insulted to them. But the hated enemy is burning our forests, burning our houses, destroying water lines. Do they think that this will stop us? We have drawn water lines everywhere – to remote mountains, to mountain villages. We will restore them all, all of them. Relevant instructions have already been given, and I am confident that we will do it in time.

The enemy gave Kalbajar another ugly name. They had made maps of the “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic”. Where are those maps? They all gone. Those maps are just a piece of paper. The whole territory of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, Shusha, as well as seven surrounding districts, were

included in the “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic”. These maps were published, included in textbooks and displayed at exhibitions. They presented these maps as “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic”. What is left of those maps now? Nothing! Azerbaijan has taken the necessary steps to restore its territorial integrity.

I want to return to the period of negotiations. At that time, I was repeatedly told that the conflict should be resolved only peacefully. I can say that all international organizations, the leaders of all superpowers I was in contact with have repeatedly said that there is no military solution to the conflict. These statements are also available in the media. What was I saying? I said there was one! I said that if necessary, we would liberate our lands by military means. I said that war is never ruled out. During the talks, it was repeatedly proposed at various stages that the Azerbaijani side renounce the path of war. I never agreed to that. Then they started accusing me, saying that Ilham Aliyev wanted to start a war. I said that I wanted to resolve the issue peacefully, but I want to resolve it. What did Armenia want? To maintain the status quo and make it eternal. They believed that if they had achieved this in 26-27 years, then they would continue to do so. They believed that their patrons would always defend them, stand behind them and fight for them. They generally think that the whole world owes them something. They want to rule their country with this harmful and sick mentality that someone must come and help them. What are you capable of doing? If you always cling to someone's skirt and hope for some privileges, then what are you capable of doing? This mentality has led their society in the wrong direction. Today, they are dissatisfied with everyone. Even today, people are making claims about why no-one is defending us. Who should anyone protect you? You are an independent country – if it is possible to say so at all – so live as an independent country. This is first. Second, you have invaded someone else's land. You have left a million people homeless. You have destroyed all buildings, houses and cities. You have acted like a savage. Justice is not on your side, international law is not on your side, historical truth is not on your side. But they thought that they would keep these lands under occupation forever. They believed that time would pass and generations would change, the Azerbaijani people would forget this and come to terms with this situation. They were wrong. We never intended to put up with this situation. As President, I have been doing my best over the years to ensure that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is always on the agenda, it is always at the center of the agenda. Let the feelings of patriotism, national pride and solidarity rise to a higher level within the country. And this issue should always be on the agenda at the international level. Let everyone know what the truth is, let everyone know who is the aggressor and who is the victim, and we have achieved this. Everyone in the world knows that now. If we pay attention to the foreign media during the Patriotic War, we will see that, of course, biased, Islamophobic, anti-Azerbaijani, pro-Armenian articles and reports prevail. However, at the same time, unlike earlier times, many objective and truthful reports and articles were published. I can say that we have won the information war. We have won the war on the battlefield, we have won the war in the information space, we have won the war in the political arena. The results of the war were as I was saying. From the first days, I said that this issue must be resolved through military and political means. I said that we can stop the military solution at any time and we are ready to do that. But on one condition – Pashinyan must personally say when he will leave our lands. He must make a commitment and provide a timetable. It must be stated when they will leave our lands. As soon as that happens, I will stop the offensive operation. He has already been punished. At that time, when he put forward seven conditions to us, I said: I have only one condition. I throw your seven conditions in the trash: get out of our land. Go out on your own. If he had listened to me, he would not have fallen into this disgraceful situation. The results of the war just as I said. We liberated Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadli, Murovdag, Sugovushan, Hadrut, most of Khojavand district and Shusha by military means. We broke the enemy's back on the battlefield. One day after the liberation of Shusha, when we liberated more than 70 villages, the enemy knelt down and signed an act of capitulation. I still do not know where he signed it. They are hiding it. They will probably tell us one day. Pashinyan, where did you sign this act of capitulation? He was forced to accept our conditions.

The war showed again who is who. Armenia is a defeated country. Azerbaijan is a victorious country. Kalbajar is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation

01.12.2020 [12:07]

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has addressed the nation.
AZERTAC presents the address.

Address of President Ilham Aliyev to the nation

- Dear fellow countrymen,

It is with great joy that I inform you that Lachin district has been liberated from occupation. I cordially congratulate all the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion. The liberation of Lachin district from occupation is a historic event. Moreover, we have returned Lachin district without firing a single shot. We have forced the enemy to do this. The bright victory won on the battlefield has led to this remarkable result – three of our districts, Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachin, have been returned to us. We have returned these districts without firing a single shot and without a single martyr.

Lachin district is one of our biggest districts. It covers an area of 1,800 square kilometers. The rich nature of Lachin district, its historical sites and underground riches are our national treasure. Lachin district will play an important part in the future economic development of Azerbaijan. First of all, we will return Lachin to the people of Lachin. I sincerely congratulate dear residents of Lachin on this wonderful event. When Lachin was occupied, just over 50,000 people lived in it. Today the population of Lachin district has reached 80,000 people. Of course, one of our main goals will be to return the residents of Lachin there as soon as possible. We will also try to return the former internally displaced persons to all other districts liberated from the occupation as soon as possible.

Of course, the situation on the lands liberated from the occupation foreshadows great difficulties. Everything is destroyed there – the infrastructure is destroyed, buildings are demolished, administrative buildings are demolished. There are currently no living conditions in these places. But we will restore these regions, all our districts, we will take all steps to create a normal life for our citizens. As you know, the first projects have already started. Relevant funds have been allocated from the President's contingency fund. The construction of the Fuzuli-Shusha highway and the Barda-Aghdam railway has already begun. This shows that we plan this work as efficiently as possible and, at the same time, in a short time, so that to organize all these activities without wasting time. Relevant state bodies have already been set up and all this work will be carried out in a coordinated manner.

In Lachin district, we have large forest areas – 22,000 hectares of its territory is covered by forest. This is also our great asset. Kalbajar district has 24,000 hectares of forest. In Zangilan and Gubadli districts, there are 12,000 hectares. At the same time, Hadrut district and a part of Khojavand district liberated from occupation have large forest areas too. Forests are the lungs of our planet. The hated and savage enemy had been cutting down and plundering our forests for 30 years, and recently set them on fire. Despite this, most of our forests remain intact because the enemy could not get into these forests, as they are located in remote mountain ranges. Of course, the restoration of destroyed and ruined infrastructure, including the felled trees, will also be in the spotlight.

I must also say that our great river, the Hakari, which is more than 100 kilometers long, originates in Lachin district. This is an issue of great strategic importance. I can say that more than 10 of our large and small rivers originate in the lands liberated from occupation. I would like to highlight four of them because the length of these rivers exceeds 100 kilometers. The Tartarchay, which is 200 kilometers long, the Bazarchay, which is about 180 kilometers long, the Khachinchay, which is about 120 kilometers long – these three rivers are located in Kalbajar district. The Hakari river is also one of our largest rivers, with a length of over 100 kilometers. This is very important because the sources of the main rivers passing through the territory of Azerbaijan are located in other countries. The sources of three of our main rivers, the Kur, the Araz and the Samur, are located in other countries. Of course, the fact that the sources of four large rivers are located on the territory of our country gives us a great advantage. These territories were under occupation, but they have now been liberated from occupation. Of course, our water resources will be of great importance in restoring the lands liberated from occupation and for future life there. Relevant instructions have already been given and there are plans to build reservoirs there. This in itself is one of the

factors that will have a great impact on the development of agriculture and building an environmental equilibrium.

The overall economic, agricultural and tourism potential of all the liberated districts is great. We must maximize this potential and turn the Karabakh region into one of the most beautiful regions not only in Azerbaijan, but also in the world, and I am sure that we will achieve this.

At the same time, the strategic importance of Lachin district lies in the fact that the Lachin corridor runs through the territory of the district and through the city of Lachin. As you know, this corridor has been transferred under the control of Russian peacekeeping forces. For many years, the corridor was under the control of the Armenian armed forces, the occupiers. I can say that the initial version of the joint statement signed on 10 November contained a provision on keeping this corridor under the control of the Armenian armed forces. I opposed this and as a result, control over this corridor was transferred to Russian peacekeepers. I think this is a great achievement. The Lachin corridor has been cleared of Armenian occupying forces. I must also say that a lot of work was done on the initial version of the statement, especially after the liberation of the city of Shusha from the occupation. The initial version of the statement suggested that the width of the Lachin corridor should be 30 kilometers. I was categorically against this and said that these claims of the Armenian side were absolutely unfounded. There is no need for such a wide corridor to ensure security measures within the corridor. Therefore, I considered this proposal as being absolutely unacceptable and expressed my opinion. The second version envisaged the Lachin corridor as being 10 kilometers wide. I didn't agree to that either, as a result of which agreement was reached on a corridor 5 kilometers wide. The 5km corridor is wide enough for us, for the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh and for ensuring security.

I should also say that the return of Lachin district to Azerbaijan, especially the issue related to the Lachin corridor, has always been discussed as a very important and separate topic in the negotiations held over many years – for about 30 years. In general, the Armenian side believed that the entire Lachin district should be given to them as a corridor. Unfortunately, some Western circles supported this position, which made Armenia's position even more irreconcilable, and one can say that the enemy became completely impudent. As a result, a very serious policy of settlement was carried out in Lachin district. Illegal settlement was also carried out in other places liberated from occupation, but not to the same extent, not in the same volume. For example, if we look at Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan and Gubadli districts, there were more military units there. All the houses and buildings there were destroyed by the hated enemy. Servicemen, members of their families and a small number of civilians used to live there. The Armenians brought from abroad were not sent there. Lachin district was very seriously taken under Armenian control and a very large settlement program was implemented there. Thousands of people lived there. According to some sources, about 10,000 people may have lived there. In other words, the Armenian leadership had no intention of returning Lachin district to Azerbaijan. When topics related to the Lachin corridor were raised during the negotiations, both Armenia and its patrons always noted that, no, Lachin district is a separate topic. Although we were not told this directly, there was always an opinion that Lachin district should be retained by Armenia in some form.

In connection with the process of negotiations, I must also say – I want the Azerbaijani people to hear this information from me – that the issue of returning the occupied districts to Azerbaijan was the central topic of the negotiations for a reason. This was our position. But here, too, a phased solution was envisaged. We were also in favor of that. The return of five districts to Azerbaijan at the first stage, the return of Kalbajar and Lachin districts with the exception of the Lachin corridor at the second stage. Every time the Armenian side said that if these seven districts were returned to Azerbaijan, then the issue of a status for Nagorno-Karabakh must be resolved at the same time. Another issue is that Armenia was simply engaged in imitating the negotiations and was not going to return a single district to us. But in any case, their position was that five districts could be returned, but in order to return Lachin and Kalbajar districts, Azerbaijan must recognize either the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh or the vote that would have taken place there, and the date of such a vote would have been determined. If Nagorno-Karabakh had been granted independence, then Armenia would have returned Kalbajar and Lachin districts to Azerbaijan, but the Lachin corridor would have been given to Armenia, and the width of this corridor was not determined. These issues were on the negotiating table.

I can say that over the past 17 years we have received repeated signals from various places, from outside circles that we should take five districts now and be content with it. We were told that we had been

defeated in the war, that Armenia had won – the implication was the first Karabakh war. We were told to come to terms with this reality. The five districts we were being given were described as a big deal, while Lachin and Kalbajar were supposed to be left for later. We were also told that when we granted independence to Nagorno-Karabakh, then part of these districts could be transferred to us.

I always said that if Lachin, Kalbajar and Shusha did not return to Azerbaijan, then there can be no agreement. My position irritated many in foreign countries. I was saying that our territorial integrity must be restored. I said that the military option is never ruled out. I not only spoke about that. For all these years, having mobilized our resources, we strengthened the country, gathered strength – gathered strength at the international level, within the country, in resolving economic issues, in strengthening the solidarity and unity in the country, and in army building. We have turned this strength into an iron fist, broken the enemy's back and created a new reality. If some were telling us to come to terms with reality a year ago, I say to them today that everyone should come to terms with the new reality. If someone wants to interfere with the statement signed on 10 November, they will be faced with our tough position. There are such attempts. They pursue one goal – to violate this agreement because it is very annoying for some due to a new security format emerging here. The statement reaffirms the establishment of a joint Turkish-Russian center. At the same time, some are annoyed by the security measures adopted here and the implementation of the provisions of the statement. However, no-one will be able to interfere in our affairs and the agreement reached. It is being fulfilled and must be fulfilled.

I want to say again that we have created a new reality, won a victory, crushed the enemy, driven it out of our lands. Thus, we have created a new reality. Everyone will have to accept it, will have to come to terms with this reality, just as Armenia has done. There is Pashinyan's signature under this Statement. He did sign it. He was forced to sign it. In essence, he signed an act of capitulation. Armenia either had to be completely destroyed or sign it. What do others care about that? Let everyone mind their own business.

A new reality has emerged in our region. We have created it. Azerbaijan has created this reality. We have driven the enemy out of our lands. We have fulfilled the resolutions of the UN Security Council. These resolutions have remained on paper for 27 years. For 27 years, these resolutions have been a piece of paper for many – not only for Armenia but also for others. We said that international law is on our side and that resolutions of the UN Security Council require a withdrawal of the occupying forces from our lands. However, this had no result. We have created a new reality in international legal practices and in our region. We have fulfilled the resolutions of the UN Security Council. We have restored our territorial integrity. We have ended the occupation. I hope that we have organized a new format of security and cooperation in the region for the present and future. Life will show what this format will consist in. In any case, we have done everything necessary to create this new format of cooperation and expelled the enemy from our lands. If issues specified in the statement of 10 November are resolved, then a new cooperation framework will be created in our region.

Therefore, the return of Lachin district to us is, of course, a historic issue. During the war, we liberated an area of about 5,000 square kilometers by military means. At the same time, we have returned the territory about the same size, about 5,000 square kilometers, peacefully. Of course, this cannot be described as a peaceful recovery. We have forced the enemy, who was already on the edge of the abyss and could have been completely destroyed. They had no other option – either to be completely destroyed or to sign an act of surrender. Look at our immense successes both in the military and political planes. Look at the thoughtful policy we have pursued over the years. In many cases, we could not inform the public about details of this policy because it was confidential information, the disclosure of which could have affected the implementation of our plans. However, pursuing a very precise, focused and consistent policy, we worked towards one goal. We had one goal – the goal of clearing our lands from the enemy. We have achieved it – both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table, through agreement. When I said that the issue has a military solution, I meant exactly that. If we had not defeated the enemy, they would never have left these lands of their own free will. The enemy wanted to perpetuate this occupation, and all their nefarious actions pursued this very goal. They gave Lachin district some ugly Armenian name. This name no longer exists, it has been thrown into trash, it was thrown into trash, like all the other ugly names of theirs.

The occupation of Lachin district was a great tragedy. I want to say again that the occupation of any district was a tragedy, but the occupation of Lachin district allowed for overland communication between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The occupation of Lachin in May 1992, a few days after the occupation

of Shusha, was a great loss for us. Armenia could already send weapons, ammunition and manpower along this corridor. Of course, this led to great losses. About a year later, Kalbajar district was occupied too.

It is possible to say that all this laid the foundation for the subsequent occupation. I would also like to say again that when Lachin district was occupied, there was a struggle for power in Baku. Those who fought this struggle sold Lachin, Shusha, Kalbajar to the enemy, and, one might say, put the Azerbaijani statehood on the edge of a precipice. We remember all that history too well. The liberation of Lachin district today without a single shot being fired and without a single martyr is our great victory.

I want to say again – I have already spoken about this – we would have taken Lachin, Kalbajar and Agdam anyway. We had plans and we were consistently moving towards them. But everyone should know that Kalbajar and Lachin districts have a very difficult natural terrain. The road to Kalbajar district that existed in Soviet times passed through Aghdara district. In Soviet times, this district was called Mardakert and the Armenians lived there. There was no other road, one might say. Now we have entered Kalbajar from Goygol and Dashkasan districts. We could have suffered heavy losses, especially in winter, given the difficult terrain. We could have suffered great losses in liberating Aghdam, Lachin and Kalbajar districts. It would have taken a lot of time.

Therefore, our victory is a historic victory. We have liberated several districts from the enemy on the battlefield, returned three districts and forced the enemy, thus resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is gone. If someone thinks that this conflict is still exists, they are wrong. People living in Nagorno-Karabakh today are citizens of Azerbaijan. I want to say again that they will live better within a united Azerbaijani state. They will get rid of this poverty. Notice that we are currently building a railway from Barda to Agdam. The distance from Agdam to Khankandi is around 20-30 kilometers. How long will a trip from the capital of Armenia to Khankandi take – perhaps ten hours by truck. Moreover, this route lies through mountain roads. From Agdam to Khankandi, it will take half an hour.

This will precondition our future prospects. Therefore, we must be ready for this and build our strategy, take tactical steps so that there is no source of threat in this region any more. The Azerbaijani army is the guarantor of this, of course. If we look at the geography of this region, then everyone can see that Armenia today is connected with Nagorno-Karabakh by a corridor 5 kilometers wide.

The Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh today and the Azerbaijanis who will definitely return there will live in the conditions of good-neighboringness again. There are logistical issues, transport issues, energy security. We will examine all of these issues. Unlike the Armenian leadership, we have a strategic vision and it has already been formed. We are moving towards our goal in a consistent manner. The leadership of Armenia had no vision even in relation to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They did not know what they wanted themselves. They used to say that Nagorno-Karabakh was an “independent state”. They used to say that “Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenia”. How can these conflicting ideas be combined in one? What does this mean? It means that the leadership of Armenia consists of incompetent people who do not understand politics. Okay, if this is an independent state, then what is your army doing there? If it is an independent state which is not recognized by anyone, not even Armenia itself, then how is “Nagorno-Karabakh Armenia and full stop”, quoting the Armenian prime minister? So they did not have a clear idea on this issue either. This is the country we were facing.

Of course, we see again, and while on the lands liberated from the occupation, I saw again that they did not want to return a single centimeter of land to us. Otherwise, they would not have invested so much there, so much money, they would not have built these fortifications. They wanted to keep these lands to themselves forever. This is why they concocted these fake maps. This is why they gave our cities their names. This is why they brought Armenians from abroad and placed them there. They committed war crimes and they will be held accountable for all their crimes. This work has already entered a practical phase. The assessment process will begin soon and the damage will be calculated. Steps have already been taken at the legal level. I can already tell the Azerbaijani people about this. I do not want to reveal details yet but this is no longer an intention, but practical steps. We will continue to expose them.

Foreign journalists are being invited to the liberated lands. International media are covering the consequences of Armenian atrocities. They are covering what the Armenians have done to Kalbajar during this time. Like savages, they have demolished, burned, plundered everything and cut down the forests. They portray themselves as a people, so to speak, who have lived here for centuries. A people who has lived here for centuries would never have done this, would not have committed such barbarism. They lived there in

the houses of the Azerbaijani. They didn't build anything themselves, they did not lift a finger, they just exploited everything. They exploited our lands. According to the information available to me, wheat was sown on tens of thousands of hectares there, in particular in Agdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan districts. I am told that Armenia collected 90,000 tons of wheat on the occupied lands every year. The total volume of Armenia's wheat production, together with what was grown on these occupied lands, amounted to 190,000 tons. Half of this harvest came from our lands. This is illegal exploitation of our lands. They will answer for this, compensate for the damage caused. Now they have lost it all. How will they ensure their food security now? There were large vineyards there. On the way to Agdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil districts, I saw that most of our vineyards had been destroyed. Old trellises remained there. But grape plantations have been preserved in many places. They used them, our water, they generated electricity. Like savages, they invaded and exploited a foreign land, they wanted to change its origin, the names of our settlements. They destroyed our historical sites, created a false history and published maps. This completely contradicts the traditions, rules, the rules of conduct in this region. This shows again that the Armenian people had nothing in common with our region. They have never been a Caucasian people. They are aliens.

We, for our part, have already restored justice. We have restored historical justice.

In the early stages of my presidency, I had hopes associated with the settlement of the conflict. The negotiations were going on to some extent. Albeit small, but progress was being made, certain steps were taken. The return of the occupied lands was in our interests, but equating the principle of self-determination of peoples with the principle of territorial integrity never suited us. However, as was the case with most of the Azerbaijani people, my hopes had dried up. I said back then and I want to say again that we need to think carefully and weigh up when and what to do, how to do it and at what point. We must deal such a blow for the enemy not to be able to recover. We must deliver such a blow for the enemy never to venture to raise its head again more. This war is our glorious Victory. We are proud. But our goal is to prevent Armenian fascism from raising its head in this region. If someone wants to provide Armenia with territory for the establishment of a second state, let them give them a part of their territory. But to demand that an Armenian state be created on historically and legally Azerbaijani lands – it defies all logic? This does not fit into any logic or justice. What do you want from our lands? Countries located thousands of kilometers away from here are now adopting laws, their parliaments are discussing this issue. What does the French parliament have to do with this issue? How many years has France been co-chairing the Minsk Group? Has it lifted a finger? Has it taken a tangible step to address this issue? But look what happens after this issue has been resolved. The French Senate adopts a resolution to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh.

If you like them so much, then, as I said during the war, give the city of Marseille to the Armenians, change its name, create a second state for them there. But no-one can interfere in our affairs. I want to say again that the concept of the "Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" has already been consigned to history. I would not advise anyone to use this term. Of course, it is possible to use this term only if we speak about history.

During the war, we have practically destroyed the entire Armenian army. During the war, I regularly updated the Azerbaijani people about the destroyed enemy equipment. The war has already ended and a new period begins in the region. But I would like to inform the Azerbaijani people about how we destroyed the Armenian army during the war and why the prime minister of Armenia signed the humiliating act of surrender.

The destroyed equipment of the Armenian army includes:

Anti-tank weapons – 53 pieces, "Smerch" – 4 units, "Grad" – 97 units, "Uragan" – 2 units, Multiple Rocket Launchers – 1 unit, TOS flamethrower – 1, S-300 anti-aircraft missile system – 7 launchers. If we calculate the cost of this specified equipment alone, we can see what a powerful blow we have inflicted on the Armenian army. Seven launchers, one S-300 radar and two S-300 detection stations, "Defense" radar station – 1 unit, "TOR" air defense systems – 5 units, "Osa" air defense systems – 40 units, "KUB" air defense systems – 4 units, "KRUG" air defense systems – 1 unit, "Zastava" air defense systems – 14 units, "S-125" air defense systems – 2 units, unmanned aerial vehicles – 22 units, operational-tactical missile system "Elbrus" – 2 units, ballistic missile – 1, "Tochka-U" missile complex – 1 unit, radio electronic combat systems – 5 units, command and staff vehicle "R-142" – 2 units, radar station "Sky-M" – 1 unit, various radars – 7 units, electronic warfare system "Repellent" – 4 units.

And here is the list of the enemy's equipment we have destroyed and taken as spoils of war:

Self-propelled artillery installations "Acacia" and "Carnation" – 28 have been destroyed and 5 have been taken as spoils of war, cannons of various calibers – 315 have been destroyed and 37 have been taken

as spoils of war, mortars – 63 have been destroyed and 62 have been taken as spoils of war, special vehicles – 10 have been destroyed and 93 have been taken as spoils of war, grenade launchers – 178 have been taken as spoils of war, tractors – 10 have been taken as spoils of war, anti-aircraft guns “Shilka” – 5 have been taken as spoils of war, small arms – 1,380 small arms have been taken as spoils of war. Seven command posts and 11 ammunition depots have been destroyed. Tanks – 287 have been destroyed and 79 have been taken as spoils of war, so 366 tanks in total. The list goes on. Infantry fighting vehicles – 69 have been destroyed and 47 have been taken as spoils of war. Su-25 – 2 aircraft have been destroyed. Trucks – 252 have been destroyed and 270 have been taken as spoils of war.

This gives us grounds to say that there is no Armenian army any more. We have destroyed it. This army was built in decades. It was provided with weapons, ammunition and cutting-edge technology, and free of charge – everyone knows that. Let the experts calculate the cost of the equipment I have just listed is. It is probably worth several billion. Some say over 3 billion, others say even more. They are counting it now. Where does this poor country get so much money? Armenia's external public debt is \$8 billion. Its foreign exchange reserves are just over 1 billion. This country is mired in debt. External public debt accounts for 60 percent of its gross domestic product. The entire economy in this country is currently falling apart. After the war, the national currency has collapsed. Where does the money come from? It is bankrupt. It is a failed country. Where did it get so much money? And let it show how it had made money transfers. We will also ask international structures. Let them tell us on the basis of what contracts this weaponry was acquired. And was it paid for at all? If it was not paid for, then it means that they got it for free. In a matter of 44 days, we destroyed the equipment they had been collecting for 30 years. There is no Armenian army now, there is none. They are citing falsified figures related to the destruction of their manpower. We have data. If necessary, we will disclose how much manpower the occupying state has lost. We have destroyed the Armenian army. That is why they had to surrender and sign an act of surrender. This should be a lesson for everyone.

I must say that the statement signed on 10 November is being implemented. I would like the Azerbaijani people to know – sometimes it is referred to as a statement signed on 9 November and sometimes as one dated 10 November. We signed this statement with Russian President Vladimir Putin via videoconference on 10 November Baku time. The time difference between us and Russia is one hour. Perhaps this discrepancy is related to this. So the statement signed on 10 November is being implemented. After the signing ceremony, I brought this statement as it is to the attention of the Azerbaijani people and showed again that all our work is transparent. I signed it in front of the people, signed it with great pride, as a winner. I brought the entire text of the statement to the attention of the Azerbaijani people. Today, when the conflict is over, I would like to comment on the implementation of this statement. The issues mentioned in the first paragraph have already been provided. A ceasefire has been in place since 10 November. There have been cases of violation of the ceasefire by Armenia. We provide an adequate response. There were no cases of ceasefire violation by the Azerbaijani side. In general, the ceasefire is being followed. The second paragraph states that Agdam district will be returned to the Republic of Azerbaijan on 20 November. This has been done. The third paragraph indicates that a peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation consisting of 1,960 military personnel armed with firearms, 90 armored vehicles, 380 vehicles and special equipment will be deployed on the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor. This has been done. The fourth paragraph states that the term of the statement is five years. If the parties do not raise any objection six months before the expiration of the term, the statement and this agreement will be extended. This is clear. In order to increase the effectiveness of control over compliance with the agreements reached by the parties to the conflict, a peacekeeping center is being established to exercise control over the ceasefire. When this statement was being signed, this paragraph was not elaborated in detail. However, when we were signing it, we agreed that it would be a Turkish-Russian center, and this has also already been resolved. Further, paragraph 6 indicates that the Republic of Armenia returns Kalbajar district to the Republic of Azerbaijan on 15 November and Lachin district before 1 December. As you know, the Russian side turned to us and asked for some time. The return of Kalbajar district to us was ensured not on 15, but on 25 November. This part of paragraph 6 has already been fulfilled. Lachin district has been returned to Azerbaijan. The 5km-wide Lachin corridor will not affect the city of Shusha and will remain under the control of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. I have already commented on this point. The original version proposed 30 kilometers, then 10 kilometers, and it was supposed to remain under the control of the Armenian armed forces, not of the Russian peacekeeping

contingent. We removed this from the statement. It was indicated that on the basis of the consent of the parties, a plan for the construction of a new route along the Lachin corridor would be determined in the next three years, providing for communication between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. Thus, in order to protect this route, the Russian peacekeeping contingent is to be relocated in the future. I would like to comment on this issue as well. What is indicated there? Everyone knows that the Lachin corridor passes through the city of Lachin. So Lachin will remain in the middle of this corridor. During my conversations with the President of Russia, I said that the city of Lachin should also be returned to us. Therefore, we propose to build a new corridor, to develop a route for a new corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and build it. The deadline is also indicated here – within three years. But I believe we can do it sooner. After the parameters of the new corridor have been determined, the city of Lachin will also be returned to us. This issue deserves special attention because if I had not included it in the statement, the Lachin corridor would always have covered the city of Lachin.

The seventh paragraph states that internally displaced persons and refugees will return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent districts under the control of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. This is also an important matter. The citizens of Azerbaijan must return to all places in Nagorno-Karabakh where they used to live. This issue will be monitored by the UN. It will take time, of course. This will be decided during regular contacts.

The eighth paragraph states that there is an exchange of prisoners of war, hostages and other detainees, as well as bodies. This process is already going on – both the exchange of bodies and prisoners and hostages.

The ninth paragraph states that all economic and transport links are being restored in the region. In order to organize the unimpeded movement of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions, the Republic of Armenia guarantees the security of transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Control over transport communications is carried out by the Border Service of the Federal Security Service of Russia and, by agreement of the parties, the construction of new transport communications linking the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with the western regions of Azerbaijan will be ensured. This ninth paragraph was included in the statement precisely as a result of my persistence. Because when the peace plan was discussed for many years, the situation was not as clear and specific. In other words, the plan was that all communications would be opened, but there was no talk of a corridor that would link the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with the rest of Azerbaijan. It was believed that this general expression covers this as well, but here it explicitly states that a corridor is being created between the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the main part of Azerbaijan, and the security of this corridor will be provided not by Armenia, but by the Border Service of the Federal Security Service of Russia. So this corridor will be absolutely safe. At the same time, the second issue is the construction, by agreement of the parties, of new transport communications connecting the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with the western regions of Azerbaijan. For a complete and future-oriented solution of this issue, an additional paragraph was included. So what does this mean? It means that there should be two corridors. If necessary, there should be two corridors. This is our historic achievement. We are taking Nakhchivan out of the encirclement and, at the same time, opening a new transport artery. I can say that all countries will only benefit from this. Azerbaijan is establishing a connection with its integral part, Nakhchivan. Azerbaijan connects with Turkey. Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran. Armenia, if it wants, may also join this corridor. Thus, a new five-sided cooperation platform can be created in the region. I have already brought this idea to the attention of the presidents of Russia and Turkey. Both Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin reacted positively to this. Here is our proposal. We want long-term peace to be established in the region. To achieve this, cooperation needs to develop alongside security measures. We are ready to cooperate. Among the issues mentioned in the ninth paragraph, the priority for us is the issue of connecting Azerbaijan with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and, at the same time, creating a new transport corridor between Azerbaijan and Turkey. As you know, we put the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway into operation several years ago. This is a railway link between Turkey and Azerbaijan. If this project is also implemented – and I am sure it will be – it will be a new link, and each of the five countries can benefit from it. What could be better than this project for regional security and cooperation? Nothing! Who is the initiator of this? We are! Who included this item here? I did! Today, on 1 December, we are already seeing some progress of this work. I can say that the “Azerbaijan Railways” Closed Joint Stock Company has already been instructed to analyze the Horadiz-Zangilan railway, which the hated enemy has

destroyed, and make preliminary calculations. At the same time, issues related to the restoration of railways were also discussed during a recent visit of the delegation of the Russian Federation to Azerbaijan. Armenian railways are owned by the Russian railways – by 100 percent. Therefore, we are discussing this issue not with Armenia, but with Russia. In general, what is there in Armenia that would belong to it? Armenia is not a subject of international relations, but an object of them. Why? Because of the occupation. It has wasted a historic opportunity, failed to become an independent country and missed out on economic opportunities because of the occupation. What has it accomplished? Nothing! We have taken all the necessary measures so far. Transport, energy, economic cooperation – we have completed all projects. At the end of December, the Southern Gas Corridor will be fully commissioned. Its last part, TAP, is being commissioned now. Where are you, Armenia? You are on the sidelines! This energy corridor bypasses Armenia. Who did this? We did! I remember the time when we were defining the route of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline. I was working for the State Oil Company at the time. Tremendous pressure was being exerted on us – in fact, from Western countries. Why does it bypass Armenia? It should not pass through Georgia but through Armenia. Leading Western countries were putting forward conditions to us at the time. We were very dependent on foreign loans back then. I remember that as a result of a campaign carried out by the Armenian propaganda, the Armenian lobby and pro-Armenian foreign circles, the World Bank postponed the provision of a loan that was supposed to be given to us within a year – under various pretexts, allegedly on grounds of environmental standards being violated. However, it was absurd.

Where are you, Armenia? Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan bypasses you. So does Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum. And so does TANAP. We are transporting our gas to Europe today. You, Armenia, could have made money. A part of the gas pipeline could have been in your hands. You would have received money for transit. What have you deprived yourself of? Was it worth it? This occupation, enmity, feelings of hatred for your neighbor have plunged you into such a plight.

We have done all the work related to transport and energy. We have created not only an oil and gas, but also an electricity corridor. There is an energy corridor Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey today. There is an energy corridor Russia-Azerbaijan-Iran today. There is a transport corridor Russia-Azerbaijan-Iran today. This year, the volume of cargo transported along this corridor has increased by almost 30-40 percent. Armenia has been working on the North-South transport corridor for 20 years. And there are no results. What North-South corridor can we talk about? Is it at all possible to build a railway from there, through the mountains, the Megri mountains? You have to be crazy to invest billions in that. Okay, let's imagine that someone invests this money, but where will this railway lead? Armenia, you are a dead end. We have made you a dead end. Who has isolated you? We have! Energy, transportation, electricity – we have isolated it. Did those passing such heinous resolutions today and those behind them help you? No! Did this affect our resolve? No! Why? Because we have a strong will, we have the unity of the people and the government. Because since 1993 to the present day, Azerbaijan has been in good hands. For the great leader and then for me, the interests of the Azerbaijani people have always been above everything else.

Who were the leaders of Armenia? For 20 years, Armenia was led by bandits of the Kocharyan-Sargsyan junta and the Armenian people know only too well who led them in the last two and a half years. Their train is off. But it is still not too late. You can still catch this departing train if we give you permission and if our conditions are met. From now on, this will be the case, only this! I wonder what conditions Pashinyan can put forward today and who he can put forward those seven conditions to. Where are those seven conditions? They are gone. Azerbaijan should hold talks with the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh” – where is this condition? It has gone to hell! “Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenia and full stop” – he declared this in Khankandi with such enthusiasm, like a hero, and everyone applauded him. So? Is Karabakh Armenia? Let him come and say this. Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Those who applauded him, representatives of that criminal regime have either been destroyed or have deserted. They acknowledge that they have over 10,000 deserters. He said that they would build the parliament of the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh” in Shusha, in our historical and ancient city, in our soul and heart. Where is this parliament? We have destroyed it, we have smashed it to smithereens. When he danced drunk on Jidir Duzu, he should have thought about how it might end. We taught him a lesson. We raised our flag in Shusha, in all other cities and districts. Everyone saw our strength. Everyone saw our power and our resolve. This iron fist broke their back, crushed them. It is a fist of unity, a fist of strength. After that, Azerbaijan will only follow the path of development and progress. We will continue to take tangible steps in the field of army building, we will further strengthen our army. All instructions have been given. We have both the resolve and experience –

irreplaceable experience. All countries are studying the experience of this Patriotic War now. We also have the resources. There is a unity of people and the government. We have proven that we are a great and proud people. We have crushed the enemy. We have broken its back. We have destroyed it. This is a historic Victory. It will forever remain in the history of Azerbaijan as a glorious Victory!

From the first day of the war to the present – from 27 September to 1 December – I have repeatedly addressed the Azerbaijani people, shared the joy of victory and reported on our liberated cities. I consider myself a very lucky person because this Victory demonstrates our spirit, our unbending spirit. It shows that the Azerbaijani people never intended to put up with such a situation, and the entire nation, the smallest children, the elderly, those who left these lands and lived with the dream of returning, representatives of the younger generation who have never been to these lands but are originally from there lived with one dream. We all lived with one dream and have realized it. All our dreams have come true today. This is a truly great happiness for each of us. The war is already in the past.

A new era begins for our country. A new era of creation, an era of development, an era of restoration of our liberated territories. I am absolutely sure that during this period the Azerbaijani people will show unity and solidarity and demonstrate a strong resolve. Having united again, the Azerbaijani people will do everything possible to restore the destroyed cities and villages. From now on, we will live as a great and proud people. We have said our word in the international arena, we have said it in the region, achieved what we wanted, and I am sure that from now on our people will live happily and in safety.

I know that for all these days the Azerbaijani people were looking forward to my every speech because we were winning from the very first days, and for these 44 days there was no such thing as retreat, not once – although this happens in wars, armies may advance, retreat, make tactical maneuvers. We did not retreat a single day. Our wounded soldiers, who were in serious condition, were saying in hospitals that they wanted to recover as soon as possible and return to the combat zone. May Allah rest the souls of our martyrs. The parents burying them were still saying – long live the Motherland. They were saying – forward, only forward. May Allah rest the souls of all our martyrs!

Civilians – 94 civilians were killed and more than 400 civilians were wounded by the sworn enemy. People whose houses were destroyed were saying coming out from under the rubble – only forward. You know, everyone should know this, and we are demonstrating to the whole world that we are a great and invincible people. We have won a Victory on the battlefield, in the political arena, and this Victory opens a new era for our country. This will be an era of development, security and progress.

I am concluding my addresses related to this topic. Of course, I am sure that I will continue to express my opinion to my native people. But I want to conclude my addresses related to this period with the words that all citizens of Azerbaijan have been dreaming about: Jabrayil is ours, Fuzuli is ours, Zangilan is ours, Gubadli is ours, Agdam is ours, Kalbajar is ours, Lachin is ours, Shusha is ours, Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Glory to the Azerbaijani people! Long live Azerbaijan!

AZERTAC

**A Victory parade dedicated to Victory in the Patriotic war was held at Azadlig Square, Baku
Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended the
parade**

10.12.2020 [18:56]

A Victory parade dedicated to Victory in the Patriotic War has been held at Azadlig Square, Baku.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, first lady Mehriban Aliyeva, President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Emine Erdogan attended the Victory parade.

Deputy Minister of Defense, Lieutenant General Karim Valiyev awarded with "Zafar" Order, was the commander of the Victory parade dedicated to the magnificent Victory in Azerbaijan's Patriotic War - "The Iron Fist" operation.

The parade featured more than 3,000 personnel, about 150 military hardware, including the state-of-the-art military equipment, missiles and artillery systems, air defense systems, as well as warships and boats. The parade also featured part of the military booty seized by the Azerbaijani Army from the destroyed enemy during the Patriotic War.

A military orchestra played the "Azerbaijan fanfare".

Minister of Defense, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov reported to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Victorious Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The heads of state saluted the soldiers.

A military orchestra played the national anthems of the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Ilham Aliyev made a speech at the parade.

Speech of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev

- Dear President of the Republic of Turkey, my dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan!

Dear servicemen!

Distinguished guests!

Ladies and gentleman!

First of all, may I request that a minute's silence be observed in memory of our martyrs who died in the Patriotic War.

May God rest all our martyrs in peace!

It is a historic day today. The Victory Parade is being held at Azadlig Square today. I am very glad that the President of the Republic of Turkey, my dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has accepted my invitation to take part in this parade. At the same time, a large delegation from Turkey, Turkish soldiers and officers are present here. This once again demonstrates our unity, friendship and brotherhood.

From the first days of the Patriotic War, or rather from the first hours, we have felt the support of Turkey. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has supported Azerbaijan's just cause from the first hours. His open, unequivocal and harsh statements made the Azerbaijani people very happy. My brother said that Azerbaijan was right in this war! He said that Azerbaijan was not alone and Turkey was always with Azerbaijan. This is a manifestation of our unity and brotherhood. Turkey's political and moral support for Azerbaijan makes every Azerbaijani citizen proud and happy, and today, when we participate in the Victory Parade together, we once again show our unity to our peoples and indeed to the whole world.

In forty-four days, Azerbaijan won a brilliant victory and defeated Armenia. Azerbaijan has ended the occupation. Every single day of these 44 days is our glorious history. The Azerbaijani Army advanced every day, liberated new cities, villages, settlements and heights every day. Azerbaijani soldiers and Azerbaijani officers were fighting for one goal – to put an end to this occupation, to this injustice, to celebrate a victory of historical justice, and we have succeeded.

Azerbaijani territories have been under occupation for about 30 years. In the early 1990s, Armenia's policy of aggression against Azerbaijan led to the occupation of our lands. In fact, Armenia's aggressive policy began in the late 1980s. At that time, 100,000 Azerbaijanis living in the present-day Republic of

Armenia were expelled from their ancestral lands. Zangazur, Goycha and Iravan districts are our historical lands. Our people have lived in these lands for centuries, but the Armenian leadership expelled 100,000 Azerbaijanis from their native lands at the time. After that, the same situation was observed in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenian side used force to commit a war crime against the civilian population of Azerbaijan, perpetrated the Khojaly genocide. Then, in May 1992, the occupation of Shusha and Lachin created a geographical link between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The occupation of Kalbajar district in April 1993 aggravated the situation and, in fact, led to the continuation of the policy of subsequent occupation.

For many years, we have been delivering the truth about this issue at all international events. A lot has been done, and our efforts have paid off. Although we have regained our territorial integrity on the battlefield, I believe that our political and diplomatic efforts in recent years have borne fruit. All leading international organizations recognized and supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

Four resolutions of the UN Security Council, resolutions of the UN General Assembly, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement, the European Parliament and other organizations supported the just cause of Azerbaijan. Thus, a legal basis was created for resolving the conflict. At the same time, as a result of our focused efforts, the world community was fully informed about the conflict and the history of Karabakh. Armenia's false propaganda was stopped and the whole world saw that Karabakh is our ancient historical land. For centuries, the Azerbaijani people have lived and built in these lands. At the same time, the whole world saw that Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan in terms of international law.

We have been gaining strength over the years, strengthening our economy, working in the political arena, within international organizations and within the country, strengthening our army. As a result, Azerbaijan has undergone a successful development in recent years, and year after year, our superiority became more pronounced. Armenia could not compete with us. I have repeatedly said over the past 17 years that if Armenia does not withdraw its occupying forces from our lands of its own free will, we will resolve this issue by military means. When I was elected President in 2003, I swore on the Constitution and the Holy Quran that I would protect the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Today, I can say with great pride that Azerbaijan has achieved what it wanted and restored historical justice and international law.

We have been closely following the processes taking place in the world. We saw that international law, its norms and principles have been flagrantly violated in recent years. Some countries use force to achieve their goals, international law and UN Security Council resolutions remain on paper. Under such circumstances, a military solution to the conflict was inevitable. In addition, in recent years, especially in the last two years, Armenia's provocative steps, statements and actions have made war inevitable. The very harmful and dangerous statements of the Armenian leadership almost put an end to the talks. By saying that "Karabakh is Armenia", the Armenian leadership put an end to the talks. Settlement of Armenians from abroad in our historical lands is a war crime. It runs counter to international conventions. This, in fact, put an end to the talks, made the talks meaningless. We saw and felt this, and conveyed our message to the world community from international platforms. In September this year, three days before the war, I said at the UN General Assembly that Armenia was preparing for a new war and that Armenia must be stopped. And this is what happened. There were three military provocations against us this year. In July, a military provocation was committed on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, when Armenia wanted to occupy our lands. But they got a fitting rebuff and we pushed them back. In August, a sabotage group was sent to Azerbaijan, and that sabotage group was neutralized. Finally, on 27 September, our villages and military positions came under artillery fire, causing casualties among civilians and servicemen. We said enough is enough, this occupation must and will end. As Commander-in-Chief, I gave an order to our army to end the occupation and punish the occupier. Azerbaijan achieved what it wanted in 44 days and restored justice.

Every single day of these 44 days is our glorious history. Every day Azerbaijan was advancing. For these 44 days, there was not a single day on which we withdrew. We broke through the fortifications Armenia had built in almost 30 years. These fortifications were built in such a way as not to let Azerbaijan pass through, not to let our soldiers pass through them. At the same time, the geographical terrain of Nagorno-Karabakh was more favorable for the Armenian side. Azerbaijani soldiers and officers completed their glorious mission with great heroism and courage and liberated our native lands from occupiers. Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadli districts, as well as Sugovushan settlement, Hadrut settlement, a part of Khojaly district, a part of Kalbajar district, the Murovdag range, the southern part of Lachin district,

strategic heights were liberated from the enemy on the battlefield. The Azerbaijani flag was hoisted there. Our glorious war ended in Shusha. The liberation of Shusha on 8 November is our historic achievement. Shusha was our first occupied city and it was last to be liberated. After the liberation of Shusha, the enemy's back was broken and it was forced to surrender. The liberation of Shusha is a historic event. Our army, our heroic sons crossed mountains, valleys, forests, paths, crossed steep cliffs, climbed rocks to reach Shusha, destroyed the enemy in a hand-to-hand fight and raised the Azerbaijani flag in Shusha. A day later, another 70 villages were liberated, and Armenia surrendered, raised a white flag, was brought to its knees, received its deserved punishment, and started asking for help. We have destroyed Armenia on the battlefield. We have shattered the myth the Armenians had created for years. They had created a myth by spreading false information about their army, claiming that the Armenian army is invincible. In a matter of 44 days, the Armenian army was destroyed, its military equipment was destroyed, its manpower was destroyed, and Azerbaijan showed its strength and power.

I said that we were gathering strength and we did. We have won this victory both due to professionalism and heroism, and due to the national spirit. We were right. Justice was on our side. When our soldiers and officers attacked, they were driven by the dream to liberate our native land from the occupiers. On 10 November, Armenia was forced to sign an act of capitulation. According to this act of capitulation, Kalbajar, Lachin and Aghdam districts were returned to Azerbaijan without a single shot being fired, and the Azerbaijani flag was raised there. This shows that we have won the war both on the battlefield and in the political arena. However, many, especially the mediators dealing with this issue, have repeatedly said that there is no military solution to the conflict. We have proved that there is a military solution to the conflict. Otherwise, the neither-war-nor-peace situation would have lasted for another 30 years. How much longer could we tolerate that? How much patience were we supposed to show? I have repeatedly said that the patience of the Azerbaijani people had run out, and if Armenia does not leave the occupied territories of its own free will, we will expel them from there. They must get out of our lands! I said this before and during the war, in my addresses to the nation and in my interviews with foreign media. I said that Armenia must get out of our lands of its own accord, withdraw from our lands. Otherwise, we will go to the end, and we did go to the end. This is why we won on the battlefield. After that, we won politically and forced the enemy to leave Kalbajar, Lachin and Aghdam districts, leave our lands.

This is a historic victory. The people of Azerbaijan have been waiting for this day for about 30 years, waiting for the order of the Commander-in-Chief for about 30 years. I have repeatedly said to the people of Azerbaijan that we must be stronger and we know what to do, when and how to do it. Life has shown that we took timely steps, mobilized all our resources, created an iron fist and crushed the enemy's head. During the war, I said that our iron fist embodies both our unity and strength. This iron fist broke the enemy's back and crushed the enemy's head. We are celebrating this holiday as a heroic nation today. The victorious Azerbaijani Army has fulfilled its historic mission and defeated Armenia. The Armenian army is almost non-existent. It has been destroyed. After that, if Armenian fascism ever raises its head again, the result will be the same. Again, Azerbaijan's iron fist will break their back.

A new era is beginning for us now – an era of creation. The hated enemy has destroyed all the occupied lands. This information is already available to everyone. There are videos. My visits to the liberated territories show this. All buildings, all historical sites, mosques, graves, cemeteries have been destroyed by the hated enemy. We will restore them all. Restoration work has already begun.

I want to highlight the heroism of the Azerbaijani people again. Defeated on the battlefield, the hated enemy committed war crimes against the civilian population and fired at our cities with ballistic missiles, phosphorus bombs and cluster munitions. As a result of this cowardly shelling, about 100 civilians, including children and women, have been killed. More than 400 civilians have been injured, more than 5,000 homes have been destroyed or damaged. However, Azerbaijani citizens did not take a single step back from their land. They said that they would rather die than retreat, that they would go all the way to the end. During the war, there were more than 10,000 deserters in the Armenian army. There were not a single deserter in the Azerbaijani Army. Our wounded soldiers and officers were asking doctors in military hospitals and clinics to heal them as soon as possible, that they must return to the battlefield and complete their mission. The people of Azerbaijan have shown their greatness, their high moral spirit. The very cause of this victory is the Azerbaijani people. We have fulfilled our historic mission by showing unity, resolve, determination and national spirit.

From now on, Azerbaijan will only develop. Life will return to our liberated lands. I said that each of us must be active in this work. Together we will rebuild our cities and villages destroyed by the enemy. We have the resolve and the opportunities to do so.

There have been many parades at Azadlig Square, but this parade is of particular importance. This is the Victory Parade. This is a historic event. In one of the parades, I said that the flag raised in Lalatapa in 2016 would be brought to the parade. I said that the day would come when the Azerbaijani flag raised in the liberated lands would be brought to Azadlig Square, and this day has arrived. We, the people of Azerbaijan, are witnessing this historic day. From now on, we will only move forward.

I would like to end my speech with a well-known saying. Everyone knows that the Armenian leadership said a year ago that “Karabakh is Armenia and full stop”. I said, “Karabakh is Azerbaijan and exclamation mark”. Today, the whole world sees that Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Long live the Azerbaijani Army! Long live Turkish-Azerbaijani friendship and brotherhood! Long live Azerbaijani soldiers!

X X X

President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan then addressed the parade.

Speech by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

- Dear Mr. President, my dear Brother!

Heroic personnel of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan!

My Azerbaijani brothers!

I greet you with the most sincere feelings, love and respect.

We are very pleased to be with you on your Victory Day.

I express my gratitude to my brother Ilham Aliyev for the invitation and hospitality.

May Allah rest the souls of the heroes who became martyrs in this glorious struggle of Azerbaijan, which lasted 44 days. I wish our Ghazis a speedy recovery.

As poet Bakhtiyar Vahabzade said:

(recites a poem)

I congratulate the personnel of the Azerbaijani Army, who have returned Karabakh to their homeland after 30 years of waiting. I bow my head to the mothers who sent their children to the front and blessed them with their prayers.

Just as the carnations laid on the graves of the martyrs on 20 January remind us of independence, the Khari-Bulbul flower growing in the Nagorno-Karabakh region has become a symbol of freedom of the Azerbaijani lands today.

The biggest contribution to this success achieved by Azerbaijan in both the military and diplomatic spheres was undoubtedly made by my dear brother, Mr. President Ilham Aliyev. At the same time, my brother Ilham Aliyev made the dream bequeathed to him by the late Heydar Aliyev. Taking this opportunity, I want to pay tribute to the memory of the founder of strong Azerbaijan, national leader Heydar Aliyev. Inshallah, under the leadership of my brother Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan will write many more heroic pages.

My dear Brother, my dear Azerbaijani people. From the first days, Turkey supported the struggle of Azerbaijan with all its agencies and organizations. We were next to the Azerbaijani brothers with all our capabilities. Turkey has always been guided in relations with Azerbaijan by the slogan of great leader Heydar Aliyev “One nation, two states”. In the words of Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, we considered the sadness of Azerbaijan as our own, and its joy as our own. Therefore, Karabakh has been our pain for 30 years. Today we experience the joy of this wound finally healing. Today we are with you to share the joy of this wound healing and to celebrate this glorious victory.

The liberation of Azerbaijani lands from occupation does not mean the end of the struggle. The struggle that has been waged so far in the political and military spheres will henceforth be continued on other fronts. All of us together saw that during 30 years of occupation these regions were completely devastated. There was no stone left here. As my brother Ilham Aliyev said, there was no building in Fuzuli where a flag could be hoisted. All the cities were devastated, all villages were razed to the ground, even cemeteries were destroyed. Mosques and minarets were destroyed. The Armenians not only destroyed

everything, but also plundered historical and cultural sites and natural resources. They must be held accountable for all this.

During the war, Azerbaijani lands such as Ganja, Tartar, Aghdam, Barda and Aghjabadi were also targeted. One hundred civilians became martyrs, mothers lost their children, children lost their parents. As a result of the attacks, 416 of our brothers were also wounded. The laws of war were flagrantly violated. Human dignity was violated. Those who supposedly do not see this have blinded not only their eyes but also their conscience. They have to answer for everything.

One million of our brothers – refugees and internally displaced persons who have been away from their homes for years, longing for their homeland – are now looking forward to returning to their lands. Inshallah, we believe that the wait of our brothers will come to an end very soon.

My dear brothers, those who brought Nagorno-Karabakh only disasters, genocide and tears should already come to their senses. The leaders of Armenia used the wealth of the people in order to keep the Azerbaijani lands under occupation. If this potential had not been wasted on meaningless defensive lines, on the emotions of leaders whose eyes were covered with hatred and blood, the picture could be completely different today. We hope Armenian politicians analyze this well and take bold steps to build a future based on peace and stability.

We also hope the Armenian people get rid of the shackles of the diaspora, which doomed them to poverty with their lies about the past. They must understand that it is impossible to achieve anything at the instigation of Western imperialists. Instead of enmity, they should think about ties based on good neighborliness. If the Armenian people learn a lesson from what they experienced in Karabakh, it will be the beginning of a new era in the region.

Despite so many tragedies the Azerbaijani people have endured, my brother Ilham Aliyev demonstrates a commendable stance towards sustainable development. We, too, support these well-willed aspirations of Mr. President and want them to be appreciated.

Glory to Allah, thanks to the dedication of our martyrs, Azerbaijan has again secured its territorial integrity. After many years, Azerbaijani lands were reunited with the waters of the Tartar River. The fog in Shusha mountains is no longer boring. The Khari-Bulbul flower, which was held in captivity, is free now and will become even more beautiful. The Kandalanchay River will become fuller. The Araz will sing its song even louder. The voices singing Karabakh Shikastasi will sound louder.

(recites a poem)

Lachin, whose beauty we admire, is free now. Just like Lachin, Shusha, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Gubadli, Aghdam and Kalbajar are free now.

Today the soul of Azerbaijan's national poet, great fighter Ahmad Javad will rejoice. Today the soul of Nuri Pasha, Enver Pasha, brave soldiers of the Caucasian Islamic Army will rejoice. Today the soul of one of the first Azerbaijani martyrs, Mubariz Ibrahimov, will rejoice. Today is a day of victory and pride for all of us, for the entire Turkic world.

I am infinitely grateful to the Almighty for these days given to us. With all my heart, I want to repeat today: Karabakh is Azerbaijan! Karabakh has already reunited with the Motherland. The 30-year wait is over. The further goal of Turkey and Azerbaijan is to make these lands even more comfortable, to achieve their further development, to turn them into a space where our children will live even better. Walking hand in hand, Turkey and Azerbaijan, with the permission of Allah, will overcome the difficulties and achieve even greater success. May Allah help us!

Concluding my speech with these words, I cordially congratulate all the Azerbaijani people, my dear brother President Ilham Aliyev and the valiant Azerbaijani Army, the Turkish army. Once again, I pay tribute to the blessed memory of the martyrs and wish our Ghazis a speedy recovery. Thank you. God bless you!

XXX

Following the speeches of the heads of state, the Victory parade started. The Azerbaijani Armed Forces' personnel marched to the podium under the State Flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Victory Flag of the 44-day Patriotic War which was inscribed in golden letters in the country's glorious military history.

