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Khojaly genocide against Azerbaijanis and international reaction

“Khojaly massacre is continuation and the bloodiest page of the policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide continuously conducted by the Armenian chauvinists and nationalists against the Azerbaijanis over around 200 years.”

Heydar Aliyev
National leader

The policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide pursued by the Armenian nationalists against the Azerbaijani people in the past two centuries is one of the bloodiest pages of Azerbaijan`s history. The primary goal of this nationalist and chauvinist policy has been to expel the Azerbaijanis from their historic lands and establish an imaginary state of “Great Armenia”.

Historical facts show that mass resettlement of the Armenian population from Iran and Turkey in the mountainous part of the Karabakh region of

Azerbaijan, which was of vital strategic importance, started in the early 19th century. Being part of the Tsarist Russia's colonialism, this resettlement continued through the 19th century, seriously impacting the demographic situation in the region. An artificial increase in the number of the Armenians in this region encouraged them to lay territorial claims against Azerbaijan beginning from the early 20th century.

In an attempt to realize their goals, the Armenians, who cherish their dream of an imaginary "Great Armenia", committed horrific terror and genocidal acts and pursued an ethnic cleansing policy against the Azerbaijanis and Turks at different stages of history. Having managed to create their state on a part of Azerbaijan's historic lands, the Armenian nationalists then started to resort – particularly during the Soviet period – to a variety of means in order to achieve their sly goals.

Although the Armenian community in the mountainous part of Azerbaijan's Karabakh region enjoyed political, economic, social and cultural autonomy granted by the Stalin regime, Armenia unsuccessfully laid new territorial claims several times. However under the Decree of the USSR Council of Ministers "On resettlement of kolkhoz farmers and other Azerbaijani population from Armenian SSR to Kur-Araz lowland of Azerbaijan SSR" dated 23 December 1947, around 150,000 Azerbaijanis were forcibly deported from their historic lands, especially from Iravan and adjacent regions, to lowland regions of Azerbaijan in 1948-1953.

The second half of the 1980s marked the beginning of perestroika ("restructuring") – the reformation of economic and political system. Helped by their patrons in the near and far abroad, the Armenians took advantage of openness and democracy and again laid their claims to Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region in order to realize their "Great Armenia" idea. On 1 December 1989, the Armenian Supreme Soviet took an unconstitutional decision to incorporate the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) in gross violation of

Azerbaijan`s sovereignty. NKAO bodies were subordinated to relevant Armenian authorities and ministries. As a result of the inactivity of the Soviet leadership and on many occasions their open patronage the economy and other areas of NKAO were, in fact, taken from Azerbaijan and given to Armenia. All district party committees were included in the Communist Party of Armenia. The flag of Armenia was raised in NKAO. Serious and inexcusable mistakes and pro-Armenian policy of the Soviet leadership led to the exacerbation of the situation in the late 1990-early 1991, with the Armenian aggression gathering pace in NKAO and border regions between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Thus, from 1988 to 1991 – that is to say from the beginning of the events to the collapse of the USSR – Armenia, helped by its patrons in the Soviet leadership, pursued an overt policy of aggression against Azerbaijan, which resulted in the killing of civilians, destruction, plunder and burning of residential areas. During these years the Armenians caused 2559 clashes, committed 315 armed assaults and 1388 acts of firing, killing 514 and wounding 1318 people. In addition, ethnic cleansing in this period was accompanied by forcible deportation of around 250,000 Azerbaijanis from 185 Azerbaijani villages in Armenia. Unfortunately, the fact that the Armenian nationalists were not stopped when the events started was aggravating the situation. Armenia-sent armed groups and military hardware started to commit bloody crimes against the Azerbaijanis in the Nagorno-Karabakh region uncontrolled by the Azerbaijani government. This resulted in the conflict`s growing into a large-scale war.

**Khojaly genocide is an integral part of ethnic cleansing and genocide policy
against Azerbaijanis**

Starting from the early 1992 the Armenian army one by one occupied last residential areas of the Azerbaijanis in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. On 12

February, the Armenian armed forces occupied Malibayli and Gushchular villages of Shusha. From 13 to 17 February, the Armenians attacked Garadaghly village of Khojavand region and captured 118 people (children, women, elders), shot down 33 people, and buried the killed and wounded local residents in wells. Sixty-eight of the hostages were killed with extreme cruelty and torture, while 50 were rescued, with 18 of them later dying because of injuries.

Genocide committed by the Armenians in Khojaly in the late 20th century is considered as one of the bloodiest crimes against humanity. Being similar to horrific tragedies like Khatyn, Holocaust, Songmi, Rwanda and Srebrenica, Khojaly was etched on the minds of people forever. Khojaly events went down in the history of wars as genocide of civilians and prompted a wide reaction all over the world.

Located in the strategically important part of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, the town of Khojaly impeded the Armenians` occupation plans. Khojaly was located 10 km south-east from Khankendi, between Aghdam-Shusha and Asgaran-Khankendi highways. What added to the town`s strategic importance was the fact that the only airport in the Nagorno-Karabakh region was located here. That is why the main goal of the Armenian armed forces was to seize control of the Asgaran-Khankendi highway, which passed through Khojaly, and to occupy the airport in the town.

By committing the massacre in Khojaly with extreme cruelty and torture, the Armenians wanted to wipe out the ancient settlements of the Azerbaijanis because being an ancient land, Khojaly differed from other areas with its historic and cultural monuments. With the population of more than 7,000 Azerbaijanis, Khojaly was the biggest and ancient residential area surrounded by villages inhabited by Armenians. The ancient monuments in the town survived to the contemporary time. Near Khojaly there were samples of the Khojaly-Gadabay culture dating

back to the 4th-7th centuries BC. When the Armenian armed forces massacred innocent people in Khojaly helped by the 366th motor rifle regiment in February 1992, they resorted to extreme cruelty and meanness, destroying unique monuments in the town in order to cover their tracks.

Four months before the tragedy took place – in the late October 1991 – all roads to the town were closed, and Khojaly was, in fact, placed under the siege. On 2 January, supply of electric power to Khojaly was also stopped. So, Khojaly's connections with other regions of Azerbaijan were cut, and the only way to get to the town was by helicopter. But a few months later helicopter connection was also cut. On 28 January 1992, a MI-8 helicopter heading from Aghdam to Shusha was shot down over Khalfali village by a rocket fired from Khankendi, killing 41 Azerbaijani passengers and three crew members aboard. Later the Armenian army occupied last residential areas of the Azerbaijanis in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. In the end of 1991, more than 30 residential areas in the mountainous part of Karabakh, including Tug, Imarat-Garvand, Sirkhavand, Meshali, Jamilli, Umudlu, Karkijahan and other Azerbaijani villages with strategic location were burnt, destroyed and plundered by the Armenians.

On the night of 25-26 February 1992, the Armenian armed forces surrounded Khojaly with the help of 10 tanks, 16 armored carriers, nine infantry fighting vehicles, 180 military experts and infantry units of the 366th motor rifle regiment, which was part of the 23rd division of the 4th USSR army deployed in Khankendi. Armed with state-of-the-art weapons, the Armenians wiped out Khojaly. The town was destroyed and burnt by military hardware, and its civilians were killed with extreme cruelty and torture. Most of them were beheaded, had their eyes gouged out, skinned, and burnt alive. According to the investigation materials, more than 50 Armenian officers and ensigns were part of the units commanded by incumbent Armenian minister of defense Seyran Ohanyan and commander of the 3rd battalion

of the 366th regiment Yevgeni Nabokikh. Official figures show that as a result of the genocidal act in Khojaly 613 people were killed, including 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly, eight families were completely annihilated, 487 people became disabled, including 76 children, 1275 residents were taken hostage, with the destiny of 150 of them still unknown.

Making the truth about Khojaly tragedy known to the world

The real essence of this horrific massacre, which occurred in front of the eyes of the world, was uncovered only after national leader Heydar Aliyev's coming to political power in 1993. In February 1994, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan made a political and legal assessment of Khojaly massacre.

In his address to the people of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Khojaly tragedy on 25 February 2002, national leader Heydar Aliyev underlined the historic and political importance of this genocide: "Khojaly massacre is the bloodiest page and continuation of the policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide continuously conducted by the Armenian chauvinists and nationalists against the Azerbaijanis over around 200 years."

Exposing the perpetrators of this massacre and promoting the awareness of the international community is one of the key priorities of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Thanks to the successful foreign policy of Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, Armenia was exposed as the occupant country in documents of a number of international organizations. Continuous measures have been taken to make the Khojaly realities known to the world, increase international awareness and ensure objective recognition of genocide.

From this point of view, accomplishments of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, especially its president, UNESCO and ISESCO goodwill ambassador Mehriban

Aliyeva are praiseworthy. The Foundation is systematically and tirelessly working to increase the international community's awareness of Khojaly genocide, which is one of the biggest tragedies of humanity. "Khojaly through children's eyes" exhibition of schoolchildren's drawings, handiworks and photographs, held by the Foundation in the leading countries of the world, helped create a complete picture of the greatest tragedy of the 20th century.

"Victims of aggression" photo and children's paintings exhibition, which was launched by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in Brussels on 26 February 2007, is continuation of work to ensure the international community's awareness of the truth behind Khojaly events. To this end, the Foundation held commemorative ceremonies in Istanbul and 25 provinces of Turkey as part of "Khojaly Week" events program from 19-26 February. In addition, a scientific conference on "Khojaly massacre and realities of 1915 events", held in Berlin on 14 February 2008, was of pivotal importance in this regard.

Starting from 2010, the anniversary of Khojaly massacre has been commemorated – with the support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation – in more than 100 places across the world. These commemorative events are held based on awareness-raising material prepared by the Foundation. The office of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in the Russian Federation headed by Leyla Aliyeva successfully continues work to promote the truth behind Khojaly tragedy through the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is the first international organization to recognize Khojay tragedy as genocide

On 8 May 2008, which marked the anniversary of the occupation of the city of Shusha, General Coordinator of the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for

Dialogue and Cooperation Leyla Aliyeva initiated “Justice for Khojaly” campaign. This international information and promotion campaign has been successful in more than 60 countries so far, involving hundreds of volunteers. The campaign is aimed at promoting the international community`s awareness of Khojaly genocide, ensuring its international recognition and paying tribute to victims of this bloody massacre.

Shortly after its launch, the campaign succeeded in ensuring the adoption by the foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation of a resolution recognizing Khojaly tragedy as the massacre. In July of 2009, the OIC Youth Forum and ISESCO signed an agreement, under which information about Khojaly tragedy was included in history textbooks in OIC member countries.

Leyla Aliyeva`s initiative to seek wider recognition of Khojaly genocide was supported by a number of countries at a state level. On 31 January 2010, “The resolution on cooperation between the OIC Youth Forum and the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States” was signed in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, at the 6th session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) which was attended by heads of parliamentary delegations from 51 countries. The signing of the resolution was initiated by the OIC Youth Forum. Signed under “Justice for Khojaly” campaign, the resolution described Khojaly tragedy as “the Armenian armed forces` massacre of civilians” and “crime against humanity”. The resolution featured a clause urging full support for “Justice for Khojaly” international campaign both at national and international levels. This was the first international document recognizing Khojaly genocide as “crime against humanity”.

On 19 January 2011, the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States held its 13th session in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. The session adopted Abu Dhabi Declaration urging the recognition of Khojaly tragedy as “a mass crime against humanity” in support of “Justice for Khojaly”

international campaign initiated by vice-president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation Leyla Aliyeva.

The Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States reiterated its support for “Justice for Khojaly” international campaign at its 7th session, which took place in the Indonesian city of Palenbang on 31 January 2012. A special clause was added to “Aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan” resolution – on the initiative of the OIC Youth Forum – which has been continuously adopted by PUIC in the past few years. The article read: “The conference calls upon the Member Parliaments to properly recognize the genocidal massacre of Azerbaijan civilians by the Armenian forces in the town of Khojaly of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 26 February, 1992; demands to take to justice the perpetrators of the Khojaly massacre starting from 2012 which marks the 20th anniversary of the tragedy.”

This was a logical result of the activity of “Justice for Khojaly” international campaign initiated by General Coordinator of the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation Leyla Aliyeva. It should be noted that this resolution was the first international document to call Khojaly tragedy “the genocidal massacre”. Given the fact that the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States groups one-fourth of the world`s parliaments and is one of the largest international inter-parliamentary unions, this resolution is of critical importance in ensuring the international recognition of Khojaly genocide as an integral part of the Armenian nationalists` genocidal policy against the Azerbaijani people, and in bringing the perpetrators of this crime to justice.

The Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for the first time recognized Khojaly tragedy as a genocidal act at its 39th session, which took place in Djibouti on 15-17 November 2012. The resolution called on member states of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers and

OIC institutions to be actively involved in the campaign and make efforts to ensure recognition of this genocidal act as crime against humanity at international and national levels. The 12th Islamic Summit Conference, supreme body of OIC, which took place on 6-7 February 2013 in the Egyptian capital of Cairo and was attended by heads of state and government, recognized Khojaly tragedy as a genocidal act and crime against humanity.

The 40th session of the 57-state Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held in Conakry, Guinea, on 9-11 December 2013, once again recognized Khojaly tragedy as a genocidal act. The resolution included a separate clause on “Justice for Khojaly” campaign initiated by General Coordinator of the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation Leyla Aliyeva. The clause read: “The Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation welcomes “Justice for Khojaly” awareness campaign and calls on member states to be actively involved in the campaign and make necessary efforts to ensure recognition of this genocidal act as crime against humanity at national and international levels.”

On 18-19 February 2014, the Iranian capital of Tehran hosted the 9th session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States, which was attended by parliamentary delegates from 53 member states. The council adopted “Cooperation between the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States and OIC Youth Forum” resolution, which once again called Khojaly tragedy “a genocidal act and crime against humanity”.

On 27-28 May 2015, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation once again recognized Khojaly tragedy as a genocidal act. At the Council’s 42nd session in Kuwait, a delegation of the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation introduced a special resolution, calling on member states and OIC institutions to be actively involved in “Justice for

Khojaly” campaign and stressing the necessity of bringing the perpetrators of Khojaly tragedy to justice.

At its 11th conference held on 25 January 2016, the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States adopted “Cooperation between the Islamic Conference Youth Forum and PUIC” resolution, recognizing Khojaly tragedy as a genocidal act and crime against humanity. The resolution also urged parliaments of the OIC member states to make necessary steps to ensure that those who committed Khojaly face the full force of the law.

This year marks the 8th anniversary of the launch of “Justice for Khojaly” campaign initiated by General Coordinator of the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation Leyla Aliyeva. In order to realize goals set by the campaign the Islamic Conference Youth Forum has carried out extensive work during this period. In order to achieve legal, political and moral recognition of Khojaly genocide internationally, the OIC Youth Forum defined the ensuring of the tragedy`s recognition as crime against humanity and genocide in international documents as one of its key priorities under the campaign. As a result of what has been done in recent years Khojaly genocide has been recognized as a genocidal act and crime against humanity at all levels within OIC, including the Summit Conference of the heads of state, supreme body of the organization.

Wider international recognition of Khojaly tragedy as genocide

Work to ensure recognition of Khojaly tragedy as genocide is already yielding serious results. Thus, the 14th, 15th and 16th anniversary of Khojaly genocide was widely celebrated in Moscow, Germany, USA, Turkey, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Kuwait and a number of other countries. Khojaly genocide was broadly discussed at special sessions of the Grand National Assembly of

Turkey from 2005 to 2007. A number of commemorative ceremonies and campaigns were organized under “Khojaly Week” program of events in different Turkish cities from 19 to 26 February 2011. These events continue to be held on a yearly basis, also gathering pace in a number of cities across the world.

The 19th anniversary of Khojaly genocide was commemorated at the US House of Representatives in 2011. In 2012, congressmen Steve Cohen and Dan Boren released separate statements on the 20th anniversary of Khojaly genocide, describing the extent of the cruelty of this massacre against women, children and the elderly as “unfathomable”. The first step towards achieving recognition of Khojaly genocide in the USA was taken on 25 February 2010. On that day the House of Representatives of the state of Massachusetts adopted a resolution recognizing Khojaly massacre. On 11 June 2011, the state of Texas passed a resolution recognizing and commemorating victims of Khojaly massacre. The resolution HR 535, adopted by the House of Representatives, said: “When a large group of Azerbaijani civilians attempted to evacuate the area, they were fired on by the Armenian and Russian soldiers, resulting in the largest massacre of that bloody conflict.”

On 23 February 2012, the states of New Jersey and Georgia passed resolutions on Khojaly massacre. The resolution HR 1594 adopted by the House of Representatives of Georgia was a result of intensive lobbying efforts of the Azerbaijani and Turkish diasporas. On 23 March 2012, the House of Representatives of the state of Maine passed a resolution on the 20th anniversary of Khojaly massacre.

International recognition of Khojaly genocide gathered pace in 2013. Thus, on 28 January, the Senate and later the House of Representatives of the state of New Mexico passed resolutions recognizing Khojaly massacre. The House of Representatives and the Senate of the state of Arkansas passed resolutions on

Khojaly massacre on 8 and 11 February respectively. Then on 4 March the State of Oklahoma, on 8 March the State of Indiana, on 18 March the Pennsylvania General Assembly and the House of Representatives of the State of Tennessee, on 3 April the House of Representatives of the State of West Virginia passed resolutions on the 21st anniversary of Khojaly massacre. On 3 May, the Connecticut General Assembly recognized Khojaly massacre. In February 2015, the Senate of the State of Arizona passed a resolution recognizing Khojaly massacre. In March, the governor of Utah signed a resolution recognizing Khojaly massacre. In 2016, the states of Nebraska, Hawaii and Montana signed a special proclamation recognizing Khojaly massacre. Thus, the number of US states condemning and recognizing Khojaly massacre grew to 20.

On 20 December 2011, the Chamber of Deputies of the Mexican Congress passed a resolution sharply condemning the occupation of Azerbaijan`s lands and the massacre in Khojaly by the Armenian armed forces. On 1 February 2012, the Senate of Pakistan adopted a resolution recognizing Khojaly genocide. In the resolution, the Foreign Relations Committee condemned genocide against civilians. Colombia was the second Latin American country after Mexico to recognize Khojaly genocide when its Senate adopted a resolution on 23 April 2012. On 28 May, the Senate of Jordan made a statement on Khojaly genocide, on 13 June the parliament of Peru, and on 30 July the House of Representatives of the Colombian Congress passed resolutions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Khojaly genocide.

On 17 January 2014, the National Congress of Honduras adopted resolution No 333-2013 recognizing occupation of the Azerbaijani lands and Khojaly genocide. It was approved by the president and secretaries of the National Congress. The resolution came into force and became a law after its approval by

the President and Foreign Minister of Honduras on 24 January 2014, and after its publication in the official The Gazette newspaper on 13 February 2014.

On 13 August, the National Assembly of Panama adopted resolution No 4 “On the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories by the Armenian armed forces”. The resolution strongly condemned the occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and adjacent seven regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan by the Armenian armed forces. It also called on Armenia to fulfill the four relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council.

On 1 September 2014, the Committee of Foreign Relations of Sudan’s National Assembly adopted a resolution, recognizing the bloody events happened in Azerbaijan’s Khojaly town in 1992 as an act of genocide and crime against humanity. Referring to the United Nations Security Council resolutions No 822, 853, 874 and 884, the resolution condemned “the arbitrary killings” of Khojaly town civilians as well as the aggressions against Azerbaijan, and calls for “immediate, full and unconditional” withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from occupied territories of Azerbaijan including its Nagorno-Karabakh region. The resolution also voiced support for “the position of the relatives of the victims of Khojaly killings to receive a just and judicious compensation commensurating with the material and moral loss incurred on them”.

Work to ensure global recognition of Khojaly genocide has continued ever since, with the issue raised and political documents adopted at parliaments of European countries. On 12 February 2013, Romanian Democratic Liberal Party group presented a political statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which condemned the Armenians’ atrocities in Khojaly and occupation of Azerbaijan’s lands, to the parliament. MP Lucian Militaru read out the text of the statement at the parliament’s session. He said that the brutal killing of civilians by the

Armenian armed forces in the town of Khojaly should be recognized by the international community as crime against humanity.

The Czech Republic was the first member state of the European Union to officially condemn Armenia for killing civilians in Khojaly and recognize these events as a genocidal act. On 7 February 2013, the Foreign Relations Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the country's Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the brutal killing by the Armenian military units of 613 defenseless civilians in the occupied town of Khojaly 21 years ago.

In this resolution, the Czech Republic once again officially recognized the Nagorno-Karabakh region as an integral part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and accused Armenia of occupying this territory and committing the most horrific crime in Khojaly. On 26 February 2013, the House of Peoples (upper chamber) of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina passed – by an overwhelming majority – a resolution “On recognition and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan”, condemning Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan and Khojaly genocide.

On 29 January 2015, President of Israel Reuven Rivlin mentioned Khojaly genocide as he addressed the UN General Assembly marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

Thus, work to ensure promotion and recognition of Khojaly genocide is yielding serious results, and the process is gathering pace. This is certainly the result of a fruitful awareness-raising policy conducted by the Azerbaijani government, which is of crucial importance in increasing the international community's awareness of Armenia's military aggression against Azerbaijan.

The aggressor country has been conducting its policy of occupation in front of the eyes of the world community for 24 years. Having created a mono-ethnic state, the leadership of Armenia occupied Nagorno-Karabakh (4,4000 square km),

and Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Qubadli and Zangilan districts located beyond the border of and measuring four times bigger than the Nagorno-Karabakh region itself. The Armenians conducted ethnic cleansing in all these regions. Armenia is trying to present its territorial claims to the Nagorno-Karabakh as the attempt of the Armenian community in this region to define its destiny. This resulted in the expulsion of over million people (15 per cent of the total population) from Azerbaijan`s occupied lands, who became refugees and IDPs.

Twenty per cent of Azerbaijan`s territory is now under occupation. As a result of occupation nearly 900 residential areas, 22 museums and four art galleries, nine historically important palaces, 40,000 museums, 44 temples and nine mosques were destroyed, plundered and burnt. In addition, 927 libraries, 4.6 million books and valuable historic manuscripts were annihilated. The military aggression resulted in the destruction of 17,000 square km of the fertile soil, 900 residential settlements, 7,000 industrial and agricultural enterprises, 700 educational institutions, 665 medical centers, 800km highways, 160 bridges, 23,000 km water and 15,000 km power lines. According to estimations, apart from moral and psychological damage, Azerbaijan`s economy suffered \$320 billion loss.

At all stages of history this policy of occupation has been accompanied by mass political killings. Thus, 20,000 Azerbaijanis were killed, more than 100,000 were wounded, 50,000 became disabled as a result of Armenia`s military aggression from 1988 to 1993. During the conflict 4853 people went missing, with 1357 freed from captivity, while 783 still remain hostages in Armenia. According to data of the International Committee of the Red Cross, 439 people died in captivity.

Under international law, genocide is an act against peace and humanity, and is considered the most serious crime. On 9 December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution No 260 (III) on the Prevention and

Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which came into effect in 1961, defined the legal aspects of the crime of genocide. By conducting military aggression against Azerbaijan, Armenia violated all clauses of this convention. One of the facts testifying to continuity of Armenia`s criminal policy is that in the 20th century alone the Armenian nationalists subjected the Azerbaijanis to genocide and ethnic cleansing four times – in 1905-1906, 1918-1920, 1948-1953 and 1988-1993.

The aforementioned facts shed light on Armenia`s policy of aggression and occupation. So in accordance with this convention, Azerbaijan has all legal grounds for filing a lawsuit against Armenia at the international court of the United Nations. In an executive order marking the 20th anniversary of Khojaly genocide, President Ilham Aliyev said: “The truth behind Khojaly genocide, which was part of the ethnic cleansing policy that the Armenian chauvinist circles pursued against the Azerbaijanis stage-by-stage in the 19th-20th centuries, must be made known to the world community, parliaments of foreign countries, and this serious military crime committed against the Azerbaijani people and entire humanity must be internationally recognized.”

We believe that this day is not far off. As a result of the Azerbaijani government`s policy under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev our territories will be freed from occupation and the perpetrators will face the full force of the law.