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Seventy-sixth year****Letter dated 5 May 2021 from the Permanent Representative of
Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to submit to you a letter from Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, regarding the initial results of the ongoing investigation conducted by the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan in connection with the intentional killing of Azerbaijani civilians by servicemen of the armed forces of Armenia in the village of Bashlibel of the Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan in April 1993 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 34, 35, 40, 64, 70, 72, 86 and 135, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 5 May 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter dated 4 May 2021 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to inform you of the initial results of the ongoing investigation by the General Prosecutor's Office regarding the intentional killing of Azerbaijani civilians by the servicemen of the armed forces of Armenia in the Bashlibel village of the Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan in the course of the latter's invasion by Armenia in April 1993.

Having regained access to the territories of Azerbaijan following their liberation after an almost 30-year-long military occupation of Armenia, the relevant authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan are now able to collect additional material evidence with regard to numerous heinous crimes, including crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by the armed forces of Armenia in the course of the aggression against Azerbaijan.

As the result of these efforts, new details became unearthed regarding the mass killings of Azerbaijani civilians in the Bashlibel village of the Kalbajar district in April 1993. Thus, it was established that in the course of an attack by the armed forces of Armenia on the village on 3 April 1993, 62 civilian residents had to flee from the invading Armenian forces and took refuge in caves located 3 km away from the village. On 18 April 1993, the armed forces of Armenia found the civilians hiding in the caves and subjected them to intensive fire from machine guns and other types of weapons. As a result, 12 civilians, including 1 child and 1 teenager, were killed on the spot inside the caves. The graves of those 12 civilians have been identified on the basis of the testimonies by the eyewitnesses who had been able to escape from the caves and managed to return later on to the area on 12 May 1993, secretly, to bury their fellow villagers. The remains of killed civilians have been exhumed and collected by the investigation team for the purpose of subsequent medical examination and genetic tests.

It has been further identified that 14 other civilians, including 3 children, were taken as hostages and subjected to torture and other inhumane treatment, as a result of which 9 of them died due to physical and psychological injuries inflicted upon them. The remaining civilians encircled by the armed forces of Armenia survived the massacre and managed to reach the safe zone under the control of the armed forces of Azerbaijan, after 113 days by crossing the mountainous passes. Investigative procedures continue to identify the other details of this serious war crime, including identification of perpetrators and masterminds.¹

It should be also emphasized that the entire village was razed to the ground and all the properties belonging to its residents were completely destroyed.

The Bashlibel massacre is by no means an isolated case, but adds to numerous previously identified war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Armenia in the course of its armed aggression against Azerbaijan. Comprehensive investigation to all those crimes is of critical importance for justice and post-conflict reconciliation. In order for the peace to be sustained, justice must be served to all those who have fallen victim to past wrongdoings. This is of the utmost necessity for not allowing the same horrific events to be repeated in the future.

¹ Photo evidence regarding the massacre is available at <https://azertag.az/en/xeber/1766151>.

In this regard, it is of vital importance that Armenia finally abandon its refusal to take any action with regard to addressing numerous cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by its armed forces and cooperate with Azerbaijan and the wider international community with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice. With the end of the conflict, it is high time for Armenia to live up to its obligations under international humanitarian law and take practical steps to shed light on dark pages of its armed aggression against Azerbaijan.

In this context, Armenia's continued refusal to cooperate on the issue of establishing the whereabouts of close to 4,000 Azerbaijanis who went missing in the period of the military hostilities in 1991–1994 must be expeditiously addressed. Identification of the fates of the missing persons is necessary for thousands of their relatives and closed ones to finally find consolation.

Armenia's persistent refusal to provide information on missing persons is particularly incomprehensible in view of the fact that all the conditions continue to be created by Azerbaijan for the retrieval of the bodies of the Armenian servicemen fallen in the course of recent military hostilities. Members of the armed forces of Azerbaijan at the expense of risking their lives continue to facilitate the search operations for the armed forces of Armenia as well as relatives of the missing Armenian servicemen. Thus far, around 1,500 corpses of the Armenian servicemen were found and handed over to the Armenian side. In the course of the search operations, one officer of the armed forces of Azerbaijan has lost his life due to the explosion of the Armenia-laid mine in the liberated Sugovushan village while facilitating the retrieval of bodies of the fallen Armenian soldiers. Against this backdrop, Armenia's continuous non-cooperation on the establishment of the fates of thousands of Azerbaijani missing persons cannot have any justification.

With the signing of the two trilateral statements by the leaders of Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation and Armenia, on 10 November 2020 and 11 January 2021, respectively, both Armenia and Azerbaijan have the unique chance to leave the tragic pages of enmity and hostility behind and normalize their relations on the basis of mutual recognition of and respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders.

It is within this understanding that I appeal to you once again with the request to extend your contribution to the establishment of the truth over numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated against Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis. I also call upon you to render assistance in bringing clarity to the fates of thousands of persons missing due to the conflict, as well as addressing the imminent threat posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. These are all of crucial importance in order to translate into reality the vision of peace, security and cooperation of the mentioned trilateral statements to the benefit of the peoples of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as broader regional peace and stability.

Azerbaijan expects that the international community will stay firm in defence of values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law by taking decisive measures to persuade Armenia to become a genuine partner for peace ceasing its revanchist actions and rhetoric and, instead, focusing on elimination of harsh consequences of the war it had unleashed against Azerbaijan.

(Signed) Jeyhun **Bayramov**