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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Letter dated 8 September 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia has on a number of occasions informed you and the Human Rights Council about continuing blatant violations of the ceasefire by the Azerbaijani armed forces along the line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and the Armenian-Azerbaijani State border. My latest letter (A/HRC/25/G/15) dated 14 March 2014, detailing the cases of such violations, was circulated under agenda item 4 of the twenty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council. During the twenty-sixth session of the Council, the Permanent Mission of Armenia delivered the statement under agenda item 4 regarding recent provocative actions of Azerbaijani side that had led to numerous casualties on both sides.

Unfortunately, since that time the situation on the line of contact and on the State border has deteriorated even further. Azerbaijan has not only continued to completely ignore the provisions of the 1994 ceasefire agreement by shelling on a daily basis the positions of the Defence Army of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian Armed Forces with weapons of various calibres, but also has undertaken more aggressive attempts to infiltrate into Armenian positions, carrying out subversive activities.

In this regard, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia has stated the following:

“We strongly condemn the provocative actions of recent days on the line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which resulted in the loss of many lives and sharply raised the tension.

We express our deepest condolences to the families and relatives of the victims of the Azerbaijani attacks.

Baku continues to grossly violate the ceasefire agreements from May, 1994 and February, 1995, ignore the calls of the Heads of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries to refrain from provocative actions and from the escalation of the situation, and the appeals of the international community that through the use of force the conflict cannot be resolved, and that only through negotiations stability and peace

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can be achieved. The recurrent adventurism of Baku pursues an aim to undermine the negotiation process.

Being the initiator and instigator of the provocations, Azerbaijan is trying to put its responsibility on the other sides. However, it is obvious that by rejecting the proposals of the international community on the establishment of a mechanism of investigation of incidents, Azerbaijan is assuming the whole responsibility for the ceasefire violations.

It is high time for the international community to sober the Azerbaijani leadership which has lost the sense of reality and is going against the value system of the international community.

Together with the Co-Chair countries, Armenia will take the necessary steps for halting the provocative acts, for the stabilization of the situation, for continuation of the negotiation process aimed at the settlement of the conflict exclusively through peaceful means.”

An even more alarming development regarding these incidents is that the Azerbaijani military has started using heavy weaponry, in particular artillery, targeting border villages and their civilian populations. One such deplorable incident was opening fire on the vehicle of the International Committee of the Red Cross, while the ICRC representatives were on a visit to the Armenian border village of Chinari to assist in safe harvesting.

Mr. President,

Another example of the meanness and cruelty of the Azerbaijani authorities is the case of Karen Petrosyan, a resident of Chinari village in north-eastern Armenia, who got lost in the forest, accidentally crossed the contact line and found himself in Agbulaq, a village in Azerbaijan’s western Tovuz district, located several kilometres from Chinari. The Azerbaijani Defence Ministry hastened to triumphantly declare that its troops had captured Petrosyan after killing four other Armenian soldiers — members of an Armenian commando squad that tried to conduct a cross-border sabotage attack. Immediately, “relevant” photos were fabricated, Petrosyan was forcefully disguised in a military uniform and boots and presented to Azerbaijani society in a humiliating manner — kneeling, surrounded by Azerbaijani brave commandos. The Ministry of Defence of Armenia officially declared that Karen Petrosyan is not an Armenian serviceman and has never been trained and sent to Azerbaijan as a member of an Armenian commando squad but only a civilian. But the Azerbaijani military machine seized on this case to take its revenge. The 31-year-old Armenian was pronounced dead in Azerbaijani custody the following day, ostensibly because of “acute heart failure”.

Armenian society was shocked by the tragic death of Karen Petrosyan, having no doubt that he was brutally tortured and killed in custody in Baku. The spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia commented on this barbaric act:

“To present a young villager as a saboteur, to subject him to various humiliations that are contrary to all the principles of international law and elementary morality, is as appalling in its nature as is the extent to which it was presented to society. A similarly barbarous approach is characteristic of notorious terrorists, who first humiliate the hostage in front of cameras, then kill. Azerbaijan is going contrary to the international community, continuing to violate all universal values.”

The fact that the brutal and barbaric murder of the captive Armenian villager was committed during Azerbaijan’s presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is a manifestation of the undisguised cynicism and absolute disregard for the norms of international law by the authorities of Azerbaijan. The Armenian delegation to the

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) sent a letter, addressed to the European Parliament head Martin Schulz, the Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, PACE president Anne Brasseur and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks. “Official propaganda of Azerbaijan, a country presiding over the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, violating numerous international conventions showed the video where Azerbaijani servicemen and General Lieutenant Rovshan Akperov, who is known for his brutality, are torturing the citizen of Armenia”, the letter reads.

The international community strongly condemned the brutal and merciless acts against the captive civilian, who had been proclaimed almost a professional commando.

A US State Department spokesperson, in response to an August 15 media inquiry about the violent abuse and subsequent death of an Armenian civilian while in Azerbaijani custody, has issued the following statement:

“The United States is deeply concerned by reports on the death of Karen Petrosyan while in Azerbaijan’s custody and by allegations that his death was not due to natural causes. The United States offers its sincere condolences to Mr. Petrosyan’s family. We call on the Government of Azerbaijan to conduct a full and transparent investigation into this incident and to make its findings public.”

“France is deeply shocked by the death of Armenian citizen Karen Petrosyan killed in captivity in Azerbaijan on August 8,” French Foreign Ministry spokesman Romain Nadal said in a statement on August 21, 2014. “France offers its condolences to Karen Petrosyan’s family. We call on the Azerbaijani authorities to return his body immediately and to shed light on the circumstances of his death,” the statement said.

On August 23, 2014 Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Alexander Lukashevich said:

“Russia deeply regrets that the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is accompanied by loss of life, and not only during armed clashes. We offer our deep condolences to the families of Karen Petrosyan and other Armenians and Azerbaijanis who have died. We believe that incidents of this kind need careful investigation.”

Unfortunately, this is not the first case of killing of a prisoner in Azerbaijan. In 2010 shortly after accidentally crossing into Azerbaijan, Manvel Saribekian, a 20-year-old resident of another Armenian border village, was found hanged in an Azerbaijani detention centre. The Azerbaijani authorities claimed that he had committed suicide. Another Armenian villager, the 77-year-old Mamikon Khojoyan, was detained on the Azerbaijani side of the frontier in similar circumstances in January. Khojoyan was freed in March but died two months later, after unsuccessful medical treatment in a Yerevan hospital. The doctors’ diagnosis was that Khojoyan had suffered serious injuries earlier in the Azerbaijani custody.

Mr. President,

Throughout human history, cruelty and violence have never and will never contribute to peace. Evil begets evil.

Armenia has always stressed its commitment to a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, based on principles proposed by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group — Non-Use of Force or Threat of use of Force, Territorial Integrity and the Right of Peoples to Self-Determination. We would like to reiterate that Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh have constantly underlined the importance of the implementation of the Sochi Agreement of 2012 between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the creation of an

investigative mechanism into ceasefire violations on the line of contact. We deem highly relevant also the proposal of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs on the withdrawal of snipers.

Unfortunately, Azerbaijan constantly rejects these proposals, with the vain hope to maintain the conflict in the state of smouldering fire with its military provocations, thus blackmailing the international community by the threat of another war.

We do hope that after recent meetings of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, initiated by the President of the Russian Federation in Sochi, as well as initiated by the US State Secretary in Newport, Azerbaijan will give up its belligerent and nationalistic rhetoric, stop provocations and subversive actions and will put its efforts to work towards peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

I would appreciate if you could circulate this letter as an official document of the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 4.

(Signed) Charles Aznavour

Ambassador, Permanent Representative
