



General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 October 2020

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 14 October 2020 from the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva submits herewith to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights a press release of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the irresponsible attempts by Armenia to exploit journalists (see annex).

The Permanent Mission kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto* as a document of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 4.

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

GE.20-14096(E)



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Annex to the note verbale dated 14 October 2020 from the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Press-release dated 3 October 2020 of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

There is an increasing number of reports indicating Armenia's irresponsible attempts to exploit journalists, both its own nationals and citizens of third countries in the course of its ongoing military operations against the Republic of Azerbaijan. It is of particular concern that in some cases while bringing journalists and other media professionals into the theatre of active military operations Armenia, apparently on purpose, does not take necessary measures with a view to clearly distinguishing them from combatants.

This irresponsible behavior of Armenia in itself is a serious violation of its obligation under international humanitarian law, to take all feasible precautions to protect the civilian population and civilian objects under its control against the effects of attacks. In so doing, Armenia put the safety and security of journalists operating in the conflict zone at risk, for the purposes of its anti-Azerbaijan propaganda.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan recalls that under international humanitarian law, and the UN Security Council resolutions 1738 (2006) and 2222(2015), journalists in armed conflicts are classified as civilians, and as such should be afforded the same protection as applicable to civilians, provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians.

Therefore, it is of crucial importance that all journalists, media professionals and associated personnel to exercise maximum care and avoid any action that would undermine their status as a civilian in the conflict zone.

The Ministry, furthermore, underlines that the above-mentioned UNSC resolutions provide a framework for the journalistic activity and serve as the terms of reference for the media professionals working in and reporting on the situations of armed conflicts. In particular, in these resolutions, the Security Council reaffirms the commitment to the principles of the political independence, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all States, and respect for the sovereignty of all States and condemns the use of the media to incite violence, genocide, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Failure by journalists to follow these clear guidelines increases the risks of exploitation of media to foment hatred and tensions and promotes situations created through unlawful use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and accompanied by serious violations of international humanitarian law, thus, contributing to the continuation of occupation of territories and conflicts.

We again call on journalists to avoid visiting the temporarily occupied territories of Azerbaijan, thus not giving an opportunity to Armenia to exploit them, and those who are operating in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan to strictly comply with the above-mentioned requirements and refrain from any action undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, including through propagating the illegal use of forces by Armenia against Azerbaijan. We strongly urge all those media representatives to strictly follow the rules and regulations of the Republic of Azerbaijan related to the accreditation of foreign journalists in Azerbaijan.

We further call on all relevant inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions to exercise all necessary measures with a view to preventing the exploitation of journalists, media workers and associated personnel by Armenia in its military aggression against Azerbaijan and ensuring that all journalists strictly follow rules and regulations with a view to not adversely affecting their status as civilians. We further call on all relevant inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions to exercise all necessary

measures with a view to preventing the exploitation of journalists, media workers and associated personnel by Armenia in its military aggression against Azerbaijan and ensuring that all journalists strictly follow rules and regulations with a view to not adversely affecting their status as civilians.
