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Note verbale dated 18 January 2021 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 a report on religious monuments in the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan liberated from the Armenian occupation (see annex).

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

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



Annex to the note verbale dated 18 January 2021 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

Report on Religious Monuments in the liberated territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Armenian occupation

The destruction of material and cultural artifacts, including historical and religious monuments located in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, has become one of the components of Armenia's aggressive policy. The main purpose of this policy against the monuments, which embody the uniqueness of the territories and the historical memory of the people, was to establish a new Armenian state on Azerbaijani lands or to create "historical truth" in order to expand the territory of Armenia. Such acts of vandalism carried out by Armenian separatists in our lands on different dates continued during the conflict that began in 1988 with Armenia's territorial claims against Azerbaijan, and many of our historical and religious monuments were destroyed or attempts were made to falsify their history. Thus, the goal of Armenia is to completely remove the traces of Azerbaijan from these lands and to appropriate our ancient territories.

According to the research, it should be noted that Armenia's activity towards historical and religious monuments belonging to the Azerbaijani people was in 3 main directions;

1. Erasing historical traces by destroying monuments;
2. Alienation;
3. Appropriation;

According to research, there were 67 mosques, 48 tombs, 139 temples and churches in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan before the Armenian aggression. Of these temples, 128 are Albanian and 1 is Russian-Orthodox. It is supposed that 10 of them belonged to the Armenian-Gregorian Church, all of which were built in the XIX and XX centuries. During the occupation, the Armenians made certain changes in the interior, artistic stone patterns and structure of the Albanian temples, and as a result, they Gregorianized and appropriated them.

Furthermore, all Islamic monuments were vandalized in our occupied territories by Armenia during 1992-2020. Thus, all 67 mosques were destroyed by Armenia and left unusable. It was known that, Armenians kept animals like pigs, cows in Aghdam Juma Mosque, Mamarkan Mosque of Gubadli district and a mosque in Zangilan district, which were used as farms. Abusive expressions and hand-painted pictures were found on the walls of the mosques, whose ceilings, doors, windows and minarets were destroyed. In addition, more than 900 Muslim graveyards, and tombs and shrines in the vicinity were ruined. Even the bones in the graves were removed from the cemetery in the city of Agdam, and insulting acts were committed on them. In total, overall 192 shrines were completely destroyed during the occupation.

Just one of the Islamic monuments - the Upper Govhar Agha Mosque in Shusha - has undergone some work of restoration. However, we note that the restoration work in the Upper Govhar Agha Mosque in 2017-2019, which has long been subjected to pointless and sometimes derogatory treatment (Armenians who came to Shusha as tourists by taking unethical photos inside the minarets of the mosque), was implemented for two purposes;

1. To prevent the negative attitude of the world community to the policy pursued by Armenians against Azerbaijani mosques. Thus, after the fact of keeping pigs and cows in the Agdam Juma Mosque was revealed, criticism was voiced against Armenia. In order to avoid these criticisms, as well as to create a humane image, the Yukhari Govhar Agha mosque was repaired and widely publicized.
2. Alienation. After the restoration work, Armenian authority and the media presented the mosque as an Iranian mosque, claiming that it did not belong to Azerbaijan.

Inform you that the Armenian aggression against our religious monuments continued during the military operations that took place on September 27-November 10, 2020. Thus, as a result of the shelling of Azerbaijani settlements by the Armenian armed forces using various weapons, including heavy artillery, on September 27, 2020, the tomb of Sheikh Babi in the cemetery near the village of Babi in Fizuli region was severely damaged. The shell landed near the "George Prophet" shrine in Beylagan district.

Armenia bears the responsibility for crimes against humanity and property, and the destroying cultural heritage in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Destruction of monuments belonging to our people by Armenia contradicts the requirements of The Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954, the European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage of 1992 and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 year. These acts, aimed at the demolition and falsification of the cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people by Armenia, which are considered a crime against humanity in international documents, are an aggression against all human civilization.
