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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 24 February 2023 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia 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 Armenia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva hereby transmits the transcript of the interview given by the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on the communication of United Nations special procedure mandate holders addressed to the Government of Azerbaijan (see annex).

In particular, the special procedure mandate holders expressed their grave concern and called upon Azerbaijan to investigate the unlawful killings of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians, and the cases of torture and desecration of bodies, including of women, committed by the armed forces of Azerbaijan on 13 September 2022 during the attacks on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. They stated that those could amount to war crimes. The mandate holders further noted that Azerbaijan had not provided information on the results of investigations into previous crimes committed in Nagorno-Karabakh, nor any factual or legal reasons for continued detention of the prisoners of war after the cessation of hostilities, nor about the measures taken to inform families of the disappeared about their fate and their exact whereabouts.

The Permanent Mission of Armenia 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 Human Rights Council, under agenda item 4.

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



Annex to the note verbale dated 24 February 2023 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Interview of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia dated 9 February 2023 on the communication of the UN special procedures mandate holders (sphm) addressed to the government of Azerbaijan.

Question: The UN mandate-holders (Special Rapporteurs) have recently published a letter addressed to Azerbaijan, demanding explanations from the government of Azerbaijan regarding the cases of war crimes committed by the armed forces of Azerbaijan during the military aggression unleashed against the Republic of Armenia on September 13, 2022. The issue of holding the prisoners of war in the wake of the ceasefire in November 2020 was also touched upon. Azerbaijan, however, did not respond to the UN mandate-holders in any way during the scheduled period. How would you comment on this?

Answer: We have repeatedly raised the need for a proper international investigation of the war crimes committed by Azerbaijan and demanded accountability of perpetrators and organisers of the crimes, including through the adoption of international sanctions.

In the letter of demand, the UN mandate-holders express deep concern over the events and call on Azerbaijan to undertake all necessary measures towards stopping similar violations, preventing their recurrence and ensuring the punishment of any person or persons responsible for committing these crimes.

You may remember that in order to alleviate the outrage of the international community and divert attention, last autumn Azerbaijan announced the initiation of an investigation into the war crimes committed by its armed forces. As follows from the disregard of the UN mandate-holders' letter of demand, the so-called investigation was just a sham to cover up the problem.

The UN mandate-holders did not receive a response to their requests on the cases of Armenian prisoners of war and other detained persons held illegally in Azerbaijan, as well as enforced disappearances after the 44-day war.

Thus, we can state that Azerbaijan, being a member of UN fundamental documents on human rights, grossly violates them, does not take into account the assignments given to it by the UN bodies and does not cooperate with such important bodies that monitor the provision of UN human rights, such as the mandate-holders (special rapporteurs and independent experts).

In this situation, it is imperative to carry out a proper international investigation of the war crimes committed by the Azerbaijani side, holding the perpetrators and organisers accountable. Besides, the international community is obliged to increase the pressure for the immediate repatriation of all Armenian prisoners of war and civilians illegally held in Azerbaijan, for the disclosure of enforced disappearances and the fates of the missing persons.

Highly appreciating the cooperation with the UN bodies, including the special procedures, Armenia wants to draw attention to the fact that recently Azerbaijan adopted the method of intimidation and pressure on the UN bodies to force them not to raise the cases of flagrant violations of human rights by Azerbaijan and even more re-editing statements previously made by the UN. We are witnessing all this in the context of the announcements on the blockade of the Lachin corridor and keeping the people of Nagorno-Karabakh under siege.

Despite Azerbaijan's actions, we are convinced that all UN bodies, including those primarily dealing with human rights issues, will continue to carry out their work in accordance with the letter and spirit of the UN Charter.