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**Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries
of origin**

Culture of peace

Prevention of armed conflict

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

**Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia
and related intolerance**

Promotion and protection of human rights

The rule of law at the national and international levels

**The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide,
war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity**

**Security Council
Seventy-seventh year**

Letter dated 26 May 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing in connection with the letter dated 27 April 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations ([A/76/822-S/2022/358](#)) and the annexed report of the Armenian National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The only purpose that Armenia pursues in replicating apparent fabrications, evidenced once again in these papers, is to distort the root causes of the war that it unleashed against Azerbaijan, deny culpability for atrocity crimes it committed, falsify history and sustain territorial claims.

In reference to our previous letters and information on the subject matter ([A/75/872-S/2021/429](#), [A/75/899-S/2021/512](#)), we submit the observations below.

While provocatively exploiting the sensitive domain of cultural heritage, Armenia remains silent about numerous facts that easily expose its insinuations and decades-long anti-Azerbaijani hatred.

Thus, as is well known, unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia is mono-ethnic, having become ethnically homogenous as a result of the expulsion of other peoples, including hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis – once the largest national minority in



Armenia. Azerbaijani cultural heritage was completely destroyed and eradicated throughout Armenia, while many historical sites were “reconstructed” so as to change their unique characteristics.¹

Armenia applied the same policy to the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Most of the cities, towns and villages of Azerbaijan that had fallen to Armenian forces in the early 1990s were ethnically cleansed of their more than 700,000 Azerbaijani residents and subsequently razed to the ground. Thousands of cultural objects there, including mosques, temples, mausoleums, museums, art galleries, archaeological sites, libraries and theatres, were looted and destroyed. Besides, the authentic architectural features of many cultural and religious sites were deliberately and purposefully altered to deny and distort Azerbaijani history, culture and ethnic identity.

Azerbaijani religious objects were also desecrated and their religious symbolism perverted through their use as stables or animal pens, a potent and symbolic anti-Muslim action intended as a particular insult to Azerbaijanis. Out of 67 mosques and Islamic religious shrines, 65 were destroyed and 2 were significantly damaged. It is the height of impudence that, against this background, Armenia alleges about its “cordial relations and constructive cooperation” with most of the Muslim countries.² Furthermore, 900 graveyards were vandalized and destroyed in the formerly occupied territories.

Azerbaijan also documented the destruction of millions of books and rare manuscripts and the theft of thousands of historically significant museum exhibits as well as valuable artifacts discovered during the illegal archaeological excavations in those territories.

This devastation reflects an irreparable loss to the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan.³ Even the few photographs attached to the present letter (see annex) depict the scale and nature of the crimes.

These offences have been internationally condemned in the strongest possible terms.

The Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, at its forty-eighth session, held on 22 and 23 March 2022 in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, “[s]trongly condemn[ed] the large-scale and widespread acts of vandalism, desecration, looting and destruction of the archeological, cultural heritage and religious sites, including the vast majority of mosques and Islamic religious shrines, in the territories of Azerbaijan during the occupation” and supported Azerbaijan’s efforts to invoke the responsibility of Armenia for breaching its obligations.⁴

¹ For more information, see, for example, *War against Azerbaijan: Targeting Cultural Heritage* (Baku, 2007), pp. 265–280, available at www.mfa.gov.az/files/War-against-Azerbaijan-Targeting-Cultural-Heritage.pdf.

² See, for example, A/75/PV.31, p. 7.

³ For more information, see S/24094 (12 June 1992); E/CN.4/2001/107 (22 November 2000); A/58/594-S/2003/1090 (13 November 2003); A/62/491-S/2007/615 (23 October 2007); A/62/691-S/2008/95 (13 February 2008); A/64/475-S/2009/508 (6 October 2009); A/64/760-S/2010/211 (28 April 2010); A/70/1016-S/2016/711 (16 August 2016); A/71/782-S/2017/110 (7 February 2017); A/71/880-S/2017/316 (26 April 2017); A/72/508-S/2017/836 (5 October 2017); A/72/725-S/2018/77 (1 February 2018); A/73/878-S/2019/406 (20 May 2019); A/74/676-S/2020/90 (7 February 2020); A/75/872-S/2021/429 (6 May 2021); *War against Azerbaijan: Targeting Cultural Heritage* (Baku, 2007); International Court of Justice, *Interpretation and Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Republic of Azerbaijan v. Republic of Armenia)*, Application instituting proceedings filed on 23 September 2021, section III, B. 2. and section III, C. 2.; and Voluntary report of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the violations of the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (the Hague Convention) and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999) by the Republic of Armenia during the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan, 7 October 2021.

⁴ Resolution 10/48-POL On the Elimination of the Consequences of the Aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan, available at <https://www.oic-oci.org/docdown/?docID=8660&refID=4261>.

Further, in its resolution entitled “The destruction and desecration of Islamic historical and cultural relics and shrines in the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan resulting from the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan”, the Council of Foreign Ministers “[s]trongly condemn[ed] the barbaric acts committed by Armenia with the aim of total annihilation of the Islamic historic and cultural heritage in the territories of Azerbaijan during occupation”, “[e]xpress[ed] also its strong condemnation of the humiliation and desecration by Armenia of the Mosques located in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan by using them as animal stables” and “[d]emand[ed] that Armenia cease any attempts to introduce Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage as its own ...”.⁵

Moreover, during the years of occupation, Armenia, and the puppet regime it set up in the occupied territories, built a number of objects in the captured Azerbaijani lands which served as symbols of the colonization and annexationist policy. Among them, for example, is the statue of Vazgen Sargsyan erected in the Azerbaijani city of Shusha, after its occupation in May 1992, where Azerbaijanis constituted 98 per cent of the population before the war.⁶ Notoriously known as a field commander responsible for the seizing and ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijani territories and the brutal killing of Azerbaijani civilians in the 1990s, this “national hero” was then promoted to the positions of Minister of Defence and Prime Minister of Armenia. Armenia now alleges, without any remorse, that the monument to this terrorist and war criminal and similar outrageous objects that it constructed on the territory of Azerbaijan represent nothing but “cultural heritage” requiring respect and protection. Such preposterous claims are resolutely rejected by international law and are also indicative of the nature and content of falsifications that Armenia resorts to in its disinformation methods.

Immediately after the end of the war, Azerbaijan prioritized the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the liberated territories, including the restoration of all historical and cultural sites, without distinction of any kind. At the invitation of the Government of Azerbaijan, many international organizations, officials and independent experts visited these territories to witness and document the damage caused during the 30 years of occupation and familiarize themselves with ongoing restoration work.

Speaking loudly now about the “imperativeness” of unimpeded access by UNESCO to the liberated territories of Azerbaijan, Armenia forgets how it itself consistently denied that Organization such access to the same territories when they were under Armenian occupation. Thus, in its report on the activities undertaken from 1995 to 2004 on the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its 1954 and 1999 Protocols, UNESCO stated that it was “prevented from sending a mission to verify the state of cultural property in the area, as other specialized agencies of the United Nations have not been able to enter these territories since their occupation by Armenian military forces”.⁷

Even now, after the end of the war, Armenia continues to politicize the engagement of humanitarian actors, and the aforementioned letter and its annexed report are illustrative of the attempts to prevent and undermine dialogue and instead advance hostile narratives and disseminate falsehoods.

Regarding the order on provisional measures adopted by the International Court of Justice on 7 December 2021, Armenia deliberately omits to mention that proceedings in the Court under the International Convention on the Elimination of

⁵ <https://www.oic-oci.org/docdown/?docID=8672&refID=4261>.

⁶ A/76/822-S/2022/358, annex 16.

⁷ Para. 54. See also the report of the Secretary-General on the return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin, A/54/436 (4 October 1999), para. 18.

All Forms of Racial Discrimination were also initiated by Azerbaijan against Armenia, and that the Court delivered two orders on provisional measures.⁸

As was emphasized in our letter dated 20 December 2021 (A/76/612-S/2021/1078), at that stage of the proceedings, the International Court of Justice was not required to establish whether any violations of the Convention had occurred, a finding that could only be made as part of the examination of the merits of the two cases. Thus, the Court made it clear that it “is not called upon, for the purposes of its decision on the Request for the indication of provisional measures, to establish the existence of breaches of CERD”⁹ and that it “cannot at this stage make definitive findings of fact”.¹⁰ The Court’s task, at the stage of making orders on provisional measures, was to establish whether the acts and omissions complained of by the parties were capable of falling within the provisions of the Convention.¹¹

Furthermore, the International Court of Justice rejected most of Armenia’s requests for specific measures, including the request to prevent and prohibit the so-called “alteration” of “heritage”, which was essentially intended to halt any restoration works by Azerbaijan in relation to monuments located in the liberated territories.¹²

With regard to the resolution of the European Parliament of March 2022 – not 2021 as the Permanent Representative of Armenia erroneously asserts – even this tendentious text developed under the influence of the Armenian diaspora could not pass over in silence the atrocities committed by the Armenian side against Azerbaijan and its cultural and religious heritage. Thus, the resolution recognized the almost total destruction and looting of the Azerbaijani cities of Aghdam and Fuzuli and the “Azerbaijani cultural heritage being damaged or destroyed, including cultural and religious sites left behind by Azerbaijani internally displaced persons in the region”, stressing in particular that “these sites were either destroyed, partially destroyed, neglected or desecrated by being used as cattle sheds, modified to remove cultural traces, or disassembled for building materials”.

Instead of attempting to distort reality, mislead the international community, misinterpret international documents and incite enmity and hatred, Armenia must first and foremost abandon hostile narratives, cease and desist from disseminating, promoting or sponsoring hate propaganda, prosecute and punish numerous war crimes for which it is responsible, commit to the normalization of inter-State relations based on international law, comply faithfully with international obligations and support the efforts aimed at building, strengthening and sustaining peace and stability in the region.

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 10, 16, 35, 66, 72, 74, 85 and 134, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

⁸ *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Azerbaijan v. Armenia)*, Provisional Measures, Order of the International Court of Justice of 7 December 2021.

⁹ *Azerbaijan v. Armenia*, Provisional Measures, para. 61; and *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan)*, Provisional Measures, Order of the International Court of Justice of 7 December 2021, para. 71.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., paras. 27 and 28, respectively.

¹² See A/76/612-S/2021/1078, (22 December 2021).

* Circulated in the language of submission only.

Annex to the letter dated 26 May 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Azerbaijani historical, cultural and religious heritage vandalized, desecrated, damaged and destroyed during the Armenian occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan between 1992 and 2020

Images 1–4: Ashaghi Govharagha Mosque, Shusha (XVIII century. Desecrated and destroyed after the occupation of Shusha in 1992)

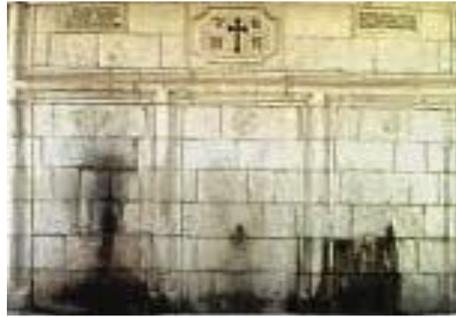




Images 5–7: Saatli Mosque, Shusha (*XVIII century. The interior of the mosque was completely demolished and its minaret partially destroyed after the occupation of Shusha in 1992*)



Images 8-11: Mamay spring, Shusha (XIX century. Armenian inscriptions, as shown in the two photos on the right, were engraved to replace the original ones on the historical monument after the occupation of Shusha in 1992)



Images 12–17: Juma Mosque, Aghdam (*XIX century. Used as a pigsty and cowshed after the occupation of Aghdam in 1993. Its interior and exterior walls were desecrated with insulting graffiti*)





Images 18–22: Mosque, Giyasli village, Aghdam (XVIII century. Used as a cowshed. The mosque was burned by the armed forces of Armenia before they withdrew from the district by 20 November 2020)



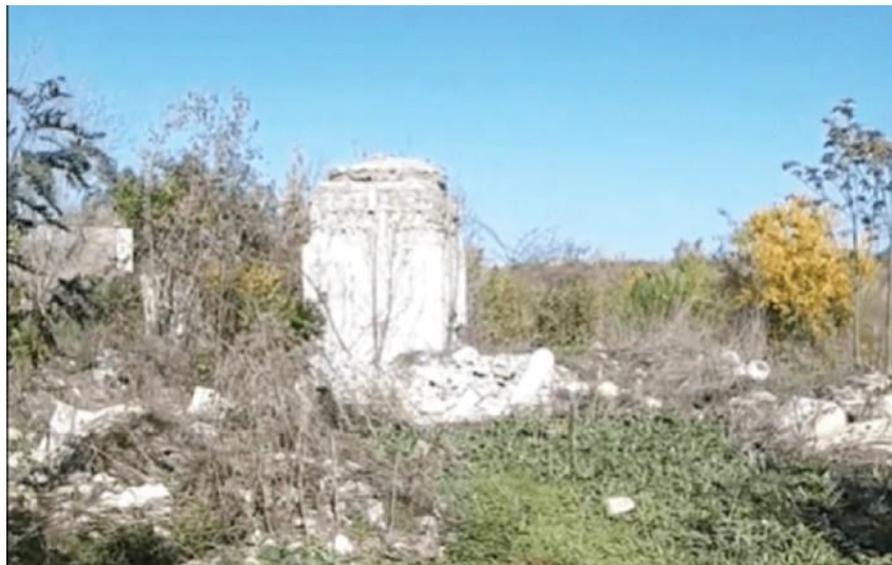


Images 23–26: Mosque, Qochahmadli village, Fuzuli (XVIII century. Vandalized, partially destroyed and used as a cattle shed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)





Images 27–28: Haji Alakbar Mosque, Fuzuli (XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)



Images 29–30: Mosque, Qarghabazar village, Fuzuli (XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)



Image 31: Mosque, Dadali village, Fuzuli (*XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993*)



Images 32–33: Mosque, Gachar village, Fuzuli (*XIX century. Vandalized, partially destroyed, and used as a pigsty after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993*)



Images 34–35: Mosque, Horadiz village, Fuzuli (*XIX century. Vandalized and partially destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993*)



Images 36–37: Mosque, Horadiz village, Fuzuli (*XX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993*)



Images 38–39: Mosque, Gedjakozlu village, Fuzuli (XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)



Image 40: Mosque, Yukhari Veysalli village, Fuzuli (XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)



Image 41: Mosque, Ashaghi Dilagharda village, Fuzuli *(XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)*



Image 42: Mosque, Pirahmadli village, Fuzuli *(XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)*



Image 43: Mosque, Garakhanbeyli village, Fuzuli (XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)



Image 44: Caravanserai, Qarghabazar village, Fuzuli (XVII century. Vandalized and used for agricultural purposes after the occupation of Fuzuli in 1993)

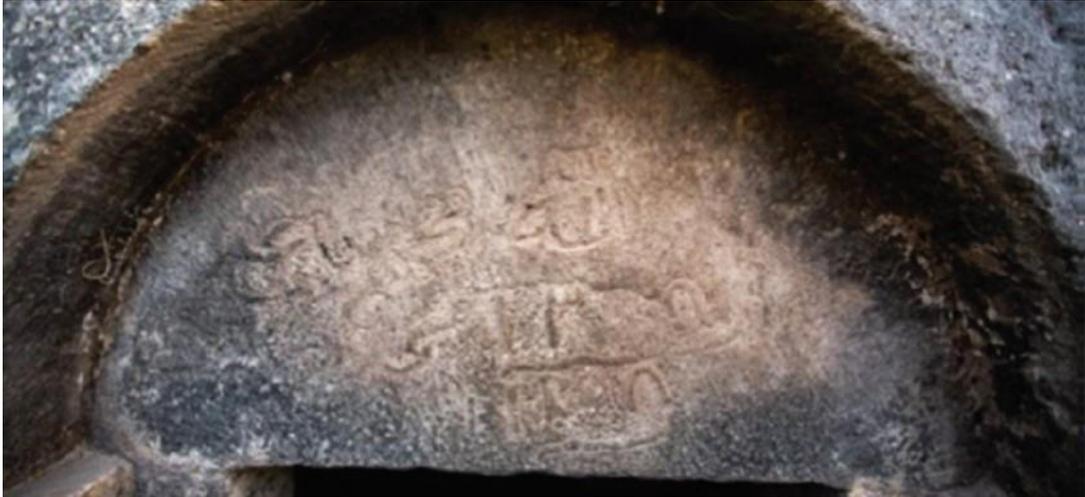


Images 45–48: Malatkeshin village Mosque, Zangilan (XVII century. Destroyed after the occupation of Zangilan in 1993. Only the walls are left)



Images 49–53: Yusifbeyli Mosque, Gubadly (XVIII century. Used as a pigsty after the occupation of Gubadly in 1993)





Images 54–55: Mamar Mosque, Gubadly (*XVIII century. Vandalized, destroyed and used as a pigsty after the occupation of Gubadly in 1993*)



Images 56–57: Mosque, Damirchilar village, Gubadly (XIX century. Vandalized, partially destroyed and used as a pigsty after the occupation of Gubadly in 1993)



Image 58: Mosque, Dondarli village, Gubadly (XIX century. Vandalized, partially destroyed and used as a pigsty after the occupation of Gubadly in 1993)



Image 59: Mosque, Papi village, Cabrayil (*XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Cabrayil in 1993*)



Image 60: Mosque, Yukhari Mazra village, Cabrayil (*XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Cabrayil in 1993*)



Image 61: Mosque, Suleymanli village, Cabrayil (*XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Cabrayil in 1993*)



Images 62–63: Old cemetery, northwest of the city of Cabrayil (*Middle ages. Was completely destroyed and the graves were taken out after the occupation of Cabrayil in 1993*)



Images 64–65: Old cemetery, Karkhulu village, Cabrayil (XVII–XVIII centuries. Completely destroyed after the occupation of Cabrayil in 1993)



Images 66–68: Khudavank Cloister, Kalbajar (VI, XII, XVIII centuries. As the armed forces of Armenia were withdrawing from the Kalbajar district in December 2020, the crosses, bells, icons and the fresco on the east wall of Arzu Khatun Church were removed and illegally transferred to Armenia)



Fresco on the east wall of Arzu Khatun Church



The east wall of Arzu Khatun Church from which the above fresco was removed



Images 69–71: Orthodox Church, Khojavand (*XIX century. Destroyed after the occupation of Khojavand in 1992*)





Image 72: Temple, Tugh village, Khojavand (XIII century. Vandalized and destroyed after the occupation of Khojavand in 1992)

