

## **27 September – The Ombudsman’s Statement regarding the Fifth Anniversary of the Remembrance Day in the Republic of Azerbaijan**

Over five years have passed since the large-scale military operations carried out by Armenia’s armed forces on 27 September, 2020, which resulted in multiple human casualties due to intensive firing from heavy weapons in residential areas densely populated by Azerbaijani civilians, in violation of universally recognized norms and principles of international law.

In that period, exercising its right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, Azerbaijan launched counter-military operations in order to protect the right to life of civilians and liberate our territories that had been under occupation for nearly thirty years. Consequently, the violated rights of our over one million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been restored through the implementation of decisions and resolutions of the well-known international organizations’ that were just pieces of paper.

During the 44 days of the Patriotic War, in a severe breach of the norms of international law, as well as international humanitarian law, the armed forces of Armenia subjected one of the major cities of the country, regional centers, and other areas, densely populated by civilians – far from the combat zones, to long-range operational-tactical and ballistic missile attacks.

As a result of war crimes intentionally committed by Armenia against the international law norms, including the requirements of the 1949 Geneva Conventions for the “Protection of war victims” and its Additional Protocols, about 100 peaceful civilians, including 12 children, were killed, and more than 450 civilians were wounded. Furthermore, 12.000 civilian infrastructure objects in Azerbaijan, including over 3,410 houses, 120 multi-story residential buildings, and many schools, hospitals, and kindergartens, have been destroyed severely damaged by heavy artillery.

During the post-conflict period, in order to prevent provocations by separatist forces threatening peace and stability in the region, and the protection of human rights and freedoms, local anti-terror operations have been carried out in September 2023. The Patriotic War (Second Karabakh War) and those anti-terror operations have resulted in the full sovereignty and territorial integrity of our state and opened new opportunities for human rights protection in the region.

Some time ago, within the framework of the meeting between Azerbaijan and Armenia's leaders in the United States, they initialed the draft "Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia." This historic moment became a significant step forward toward ensuring sustainable peace and stability not only between the two states but also for the entire region.

As the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsperson) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I once again emphasize that the restoration of human rights and freedoms violated during the occupation and wartime, identification of the whereabouts of missing persons, handover of the accurate map of minefields for speeding up the mine action in the liberated areas, as well as ensuring the safe and decent return of the former IDPs to their native lands are of great importance as fundamental issues based on international law.

In this light, it is very significant that international organizations, world states, ombudspersons, and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) of other countries take joint efforts to uphold the norms of international law, punish those who committed war crimes, restore the violated human rights, and sustainable peace.

I honor the dearest souls of our martyrs who fell defending for full restoration of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, protection of the rights to life of the civilian population, and restoration of the rights and freedoms of refugees and former IDPs which had been seriously violated for a long-time, and I wish peace to our country, region and the world.

**Sabina Aliyeva**  
**The Commissioner for Human Rights**  
**(Ombudsman)**  
**of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

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*The statement was sent to the UN Secretary-General, UN Security Council, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN High Commissioner for*

*Refugees (UNHCR), UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), UNICEF, UNESCO, European Union (EU), Council of Europe (CoE), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) and European Ombudsman Institution (EOI), Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and Ombudsman Association of Member States to this organization (OICOA), Association of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions of Turkic States (TURKOMB), OIC-Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (OIC-IPHRC), European Network of Ombudspersons of Children (ENOC), International Peace Bureau (IPB), Universal Peace Federation (UPF), ombudspersons and NHRIs of different countries, diplomatic missions of the Republic of Azerbaijan abroad, and the foreign diplomatic missions in Azerbaijan, and diaspora organizations of Azerbaijan.*