

THE STATEMENT
by the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the
Republic of Azerbaijan regarding the 35th anniversary of the January 20,
1990 Tragedy

It has been 35 years since the January 20 tragedy – a bloody event that was mercilessly committed against an unarmed population by the former USSR armed forces on the night of January 19 to 20, 1990, in order to suppress the spirit of national freedom and the desire for independence of the people of Azerbaijan.

In order to break the will of our people protesting against the biased attitude of the former USSR leadership towards our country, the deportation of Azerbaijanis from our historical lands, which is now the territory of present-day Armenia, and unfounded territorial claims of Armenia against Azerbaijan, as a result of this heinous crime against humanity, 150 innocent people, including women, children, and the elderly, in Baku and several other districts and cities of our republic were murdered, 744 people were injured, and 841 individuals were unlawfully detained.

That day is not only a heroic chronicle of our people who took to the squares for the sake of freedom but also a historical day when unarmed people, with a desire for freedom, courageously and honorably fought for liberty. Despite the brutal terror act committed against innocent people, the Azerbaijani people succeeded in gaining their independence.

The National Leader of our people, Heydar Aliyev, with his family members, arrived at Azerbaijan's Permanent Mission in Moscow on January 21 despite the pressures and potential threats to his life. He held a press conference, issued a strong statement, and informed the international community that this grave crime had been committed by the leadership of the USSR. It was only after the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev returned to the country's leadership that, in 1994, political and legal assessments were made regarding the January 20 events.

The failure of international organizations and the world community to condemn the commission of this event at that time later paved the way for the occupation of our lands by Armenians and the perpetration of acts of genocide against our people.

As a result of the crime against humanity perpetuated under the instruction of the former USSR leadership, the provisions of the UN Charter, the universally recognized norms and principles of international law, as well as, the requirements of

the international treaties, to which the former Soviet Union was a party, have been seriously infringed and human rights have been grossly violated.

However, with regret, we would like to inform that in spite of numerous appeals to international organizations and the global community, this crime against humanity has yet to be given legal evaluation, and those who committed this heinous crime have not been held accountable.

As the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I urge international organizations and the world community to interpret incidents that occurred on 20 January as a crime against humanity, one of the gravest forms of international crimes and to take just stance to ensure that military personnel who committed these crimes, along with those who ordered the execution of these acts are also held criminally accountable.

Sabina Aliyeva

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

17 January 2025

The statement has been sent to the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), UN Security Council (UNSC), UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the heads of the European Union (EU), Council of Europe (CoE), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), International (IOI) and European Ombudsmen Institutions (EOI), Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Association of Ombudsmen of member states of this institution (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), ombudspersons and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) of different countries, diplomatic missions of Azerbaijan in foreign countries and the diplomatic missions of foreign countries in Azerbaijan, and diaspora organizations of Azerbaijan.