



**OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
PUBLIC RELATIONS UNIT**



Joint statement of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia and the Human Rights Defender of the Artsakh Republic

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The statement of the Azerbaijani authorities related to the criminal prosecution of the President of the Republic of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan is a step aimed at concealing their own war crimes, misleading the international community and intimidating the peaceful population of Artsakh.

The Azerbaijani authorities have always pursued a policy of isolating Artsakh from the outside world, concealing human rights violations and war crimes against peace by falsifying facts. In doing so, they continue to grossly violate the absolute international requirements of human rights and humanitarian law.

The practice of targeting Armenia's, Artsakh's, as well as international public figures, experts and journalists; blackmailing and persecuting them with so-called blacklists is the best proof that the calls and statements of the Azerbaijani authorities about peace are false, are veiled to the outside world with the purpose of concealing their real intentions.

In reality, for years a policy of sponsoring hatred and hostility towards Armenians has been carried out with ethnic and religious pillars as two main grounds, with deep intolerance.

In fact, a genocidal policy has been carried out, which is still going on.

Even in the education system there is a policy of hatred and enmity towards Armenians, ensuring similar reproduction in the future, the spread of hatred in the society (based on facts).

This policy is the source that nurtured and encouraged the atrocities and torture by the Azerbaijani armed forces against the civilian population of Armenia and Artsakh; the ethnic cleansing of the civilian population during the 44-day Artsakh war, with various armed attacks and criminal acts before and after that war.

These are the Azerbaijani authorities that are directly responsible for war crimes against humanity, including destruction of almost all civilian communities in Artsakh, using terrorists and mercenaries to deliberately target, kill 80 and injure 165 civilians, torture Armenian captives; for mutilation of the killed servicemen's bodies; for depriving the 40,000 civilian population of Artsakh of their homeland and houses, for forcibly displacing them, for desecrating the Armenian historical and cultural monuments in Artsakh, for vandalizing them.

The Azerbaijani authorities are responsible for the internationally unacceptable armed attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, which paralyzed healthcare systems of Armenia and Artsakh and resulted in sharp increase in deaths.

In the same way, by initiating criminal cases against various public figures, human rights defenders and journalists (including international ones), they tried to cover up the atrocities committed and future atrocities against the peaceful Armenian population of Artsakh.

After the 44-day war, this policy of the Azerbaijani authorities has intensified and took new forms. They do not allow people to rebuild their lives after the war, they constantly try to create an atmosphere of despair for the civilian population through daily criminal encroachments on the security of people, life and other vital rights and other terrorist acts.

The above assessments of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia and the Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh are based on reliable, concrete facts and have been included in our numerous reports.

Therefore, the purpose of the persecution announced by the Azerbaijani authorities against the President of the Republic of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan is nothing but to intimidate every person living in Artsakh, to cause panic among the civilian population. Even the wording of the Azerbaijani law enforcement agencies clearly testifies to this goal. This, in turn, means that the persecution is politically motivated; is based on blatant manipulation of facts.

We confidently inform the international community that the Azerbaijani authorities will continue to falsify the facts, misleading with new methods, such as hiding their criminal acts against the civilian population behind calls for peace, until they are held liable for their genocidal policies; subjected to targeted response and punished for their criminal acts.

This joint statement will be sent to international organizations in separate letters.

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