



## TRANSLATION

### **Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev threatened Armenians from the ancient Armenian city of Shushi**

**November 8, 2022**

*On November 8 Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev visited the occupied Armenian city of Shushi to celebrate Azerbaijan's "Victory Day," a national holiday commemorating the end of the 44-Day War. Aliyev delivered this speech in front of Azeri servicemen in which he threatened the renewed use of force against Armenia and Artsakh. This speech is evidence of state-sponsored and ethnically-motivated hatred against Armenians on the part of Azerbaijani authorities and reflects the overall genocidal ideology of the Azerbaijani state and military. The speech also demonstrates the radicalizing effect of international silence in the face of the Aliyev regime's atrocities and acts of aggression.*

*Watch the video of Aliyev's speech in full here (in the Azeri language):*

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLAZe4vViC0&t=1938s>*

**English translation of the full speech, with annotations by the Lemkin Institute:**

*Translated from the Azeri by Ani Melqonyan*

Dear Servicemen,

I congratulate you and all the people of Azerbaijan on “Victory Day.”<sup>1</sup>

First of all, may I request that a minute of silence be observed to remember the dear memory of our martyrs who died for the Motherland. May God rest the souls of all of them in peace!

Two years ago, the armed forces of Azerbaijan liberated the impregnable fortress of Shusha [Shushi]<sup>2</sup> from Armenian occupation, [and] wrote a glorious history. This brilliant history will stay with us forever. The Azerbaijani people and future generations will be proud of this glorious victory.

Shusha [Shushi] is really considered an impregnable fortress. When it was liberated by our heroic soldiers, armed with light weapons,<sup>3</sup> they were prepared to die. They were going to die

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<sup>1</sup>Azerbaijan celebrates “Victory Day” on November 9 each year to commemorate what it claims is its victory in the 2020 war against Nagorno-Karabakh. On September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan, supported by its ally Turkey, unleashed a large-scale war against the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination, which led to the deaths of tens of thousands of people. During this war the Azerbaijani military and mercenaries supplied by Turkey carried out atrocities that strongly suggested a policy of genocide during the war: a policy that continues to this day. The war ended not with triumphant military victory, which is what Azerbaijan claims, but rather with a negotiated Ceasefire Agreement signed by Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia on November 10, 2020. Since this time, Azerbaijan has continued its militarist rhetoric and has threatened to use force against Artsakh and Armenia proper many times. Azerbaijan has frequently broken the ceasefire agreement since November 10, 2020 and launched a war of aggression against Armenia from September 13-14, 2022 by invading the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. Azerbaijan occupies an estimated 50km of sovereign Armenian territory and has indicated that it is not going to leave. In addition, Azerbaijan has not returned all Armenian prisoners of war (POWs), as required by the Ceasefire Agreement.

<sup>2</sup>Shusha is the Azerbaijani name for the ancient Armenian city of Shushi. As a result of the war unleashed against the people of Artsakh in the fall of 2020, around 200 villages and towns of the Republic of Artsakh were occupied by Azerbaijan, including Shushi – the center of Artsakh’s Armenian culture. Azerbaijan has long wished to capture Shushi, erase its Armenian identity, and present it as Azerbaijani. During the occupation of Shushi, Azerbaijanis have engaged in acts of terror against Armenian civilians, leading to forced displacement, as well as the physical destruction of Armenian spiritual-cultural heritage sites there.

<sup>3</sup>Azerbaijani Armed Forces used missiles, drones, and rocket artillery during the war. They also used internationally banned cluster bombs and weapons containing white phosphorus or thermite substances. Such operations cause irreversible damage to the environment, from widespread forest fires to permanent air, soil and water pollution. French-Armenian doctor Ardiv Papazyan says the wounds are typical of a chemical or phosphorus weapon. Luke Shrago, Roméo Langlois and Mohammed Farhat, the reporters of a French international news-television network “FRANCE 24”, also reported about this: Click on the link to watch the report in full: <https://f24.my/75nm>.

Ukraine supplied Azerbaijan with phosphorus munitions used during the 2020 war in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez said on 16 November. Speaking at a Senate Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the situation in the South Caucasus, Menendez asked U.S. Minsk Group Co-Chair Philip Reeker and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried whether they were familiar with Azerbaijan’s reported use of prohibited weapons, including white phosphorus and cluster bombs, against Artsakh during the war. However, the officials said they had not heard of them. “But the white phosphorus is very well reported, unfortunately provided by Ukraine,” Menendez said.

for their homeland.<sup>4</sup> We all understood very well that our victory wouldn't be complete without Shusha [Shushi].

In many interviews during the war, I revealed some aspects regarding the war. Of course, I couldn't say everything. I couldn't say much, especially about the future plans. Answering the question, I only once said that our victory would be incomplete without Shusha [Shushi]. I am sure that the Azerbaijani people understood well that our ultimate goal, the ultimate goal of the war, was to liberate Shusha [Shushi] from occupation. Not only because it is the crown of Karabakh,<sup>5</sup> not because of the strategic location of it, which actually decided the fate of the war after its liberation, but because Shusha [Shushi] is the heart and soul of the Azerbaijani people, it is a holy place for every Azerbaijani.<sup>6</sup> Every time I visit Shusha [Shushi], I have been to Shusha [Shushi] more than ten times over the past two years, every time I drive up to the city along the victory road, I am sure that every person sees once again the heroism, selflessness, and professionalism of our soldiers, because the road called "victory road" was built only two years ago. Our heroic children have covered this long distance through mountains, forests, valleys and paths. They defeated the enemy in bloody battles and approached Shusha [Shushi]. After that, they climbed cliffs, defeated the enemy in street battles, hand-to-hand fights with light weapons, expelled them from our land and raised our tricolor flag in Shusha [Shushi]. Only two years have passed since that historic day, and many events have happened in these two years. Over the years, the heroism of our servicemen will become more obvious to everyone.

The road to Shusha [Shushi] began on September 27, 2020. From the first day to the last day of the war, the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan only went forward, they did not take a single step back

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<sup>4</sup>Artsakh (Karabagh) is an integral part of Historic Armenia. It was the 10th province of the Ancient Kingdom of Armenia. Artsakh has never been a part of Azerbaijan. Even during the Soviet period, it was an autonomous oblast (region) under the control of the Azerbaijani SSR. The falsification of history and the cultural genocide by Azerbaijan are an integral part of the broader anti-Armenian policy systematically pursued by Baku for several decades. Now they are aimed at legitimizing the results of the illegal use of military force by Azerbaijan against Artsakh.

<sup>5</sup> Azerbaijani authorities use the term "Karabakh" to refer to "Nagorno-Karabakh" (also known as Artsakh, an historically Armenian region) in order to erase the presence and the history of Armenians there. Shusha/Shushi is in Nagorno-Karabakh and has been inhabited by a majority of Armenians for hundreds of years. In 2020 Azerbaijan used atrocities to terrorize Armenians into fleeing the city and other Armenian towns and villages.

<sup>6</sup>In March 1920 the authorities of the Azerbaijani Republic, together with the regular Turkish army and numerous armed gangs, organized the massacre of the Armenian population of Shushi, almost completely destroying the historical capital of Artsakh. The genocide in Shushi was the first manifestation of the aggressive policy pursued against Artsakh by the newly created state called "Azerbaijan". During this crime, thousands of Armenians were killed, tens of thousands were forced to leave the town, the Armenian cultural heritage was destroyed, the people's property was looted, and the sacred sites were desecrated. The massacres in Shushi in 1920 and its occupation in 2020 do not only testify to the genocidal policy against Artsakh and the Armenian people, but are also crimes against mankind and humanity, a gross violation of international law.

for forty-four days. However, it is known from world military history that in such difficult wars, especially in wars fought in unfavorable terrain, there are maneuvers, retreats, and unexpected events. However, it was the strong will, love for the Motherland, and the professionalism of our soldiers that led us to victory. When six villages were liberated on September 27, the first day of the war, the Azerbaijani people believed even more that we would achieve what we wanted and fulfill our historical mission.

We only went forward for forty-four days. Many of our cities and villages up to Shusha [Shushi] were liberated on the battlefield, including Jabrail [Jrakan], Hadrut, Fizuli [Varanda], Zangilan [Sanasaravan], Gubadli [Kovsakan], Sugovushan [Mataghis],<sup>7</sup> [and] about 300 villages, also part of Lachin [Berdzor] and Kelbajar [Qarvatchar].<sup>8</sup> The liberation of Shusha [Shushi] broke the back of the Armenian army. In fact, from the first days of the war, panic reigned in Armenia, sometimes panic and hysteria. That is why there were more than ten thousand deserters in the Armenian army,<sup>9</sup> as they themselves admit. There was not a single deserter in the Azerbaijan Army. This testifies to the high moral qualities of our people. Our soldiers were prepared to die, they went into battle with the slogan "we would rather die than retreat," not a single deserter. This is the heroism of our people and it shows that such a wonderful young generation has grown up. Many of them have never seen Karabakh and Zangezur.<sup>10</sup> They saw this holy land on television, in photographs, in the conversations of parents and elders. However, they came and fulfilled the historical mission of our people with honor.

The path to victory was thorny and difficult. The defeat in the first Karabakh war shook our people morally. The reasons for this defeat are clear. At that time, anti-national elements seized power, fought for power, practically surrendered such an impregnable fortress as Shusha [Shushi] to Armenia, to the Armenians in order to come to power, which happened. A month after the occupation of Shusha [Shushi] and Lachin [Berdzor], the AKP-Musavat alliance came to power. They came to power on the heels of this tragedy, this bloodshed and national disgrace.

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<sup>7</sup>These are Azerbaijani versions of Armenian place names of Djrakan, Hadrut, Varanda, Sanasaravan, Kovsakan Mataghis. The territories were occupied by Azerbaijan during the 44-day war.

<sup>8</sup>These are Azerbaijani versions of Armenian place names of Qarvatchar and Berdzor. These two Armenian regions were transferred from Artsakh authorities to Azerbaijan.

<sup>9</sup>It is unclear what Aliev is referring to here. The Lemkin Institute has been unable to find any evidence of the mass desertion by Armenian servicemen and servicewomen, much less official Armenian statements to this effect.

<sup>10</sup>Zangezur is an Internationally recognized territory of The Republic of Armenia, where it is called Syunik. The word "Zangezur" is also Armenian, though Azerbaijan is trying to present the word and the territory as Azerbaijani.

During the year they were in power, they ruined our country, unleashed a civil war, and took their own soldiers prisoner. The lands were being lost, but they engaged in looting and robbery. They mobilized all their efforts to consolidate power.

In other words, defeat in the First Karabakh War was inevitable. Because the anti-national government cannot win the war. During the years of occupation, the official propaganda of Armenia and the media resources of their supporters tried to convey to the whole world and at the same time to the people of Azerbaijan the idea that Azerbaijan would never be able to restore its territorial integrity through war. It is enough to look at the speeches of representatives of international organizations and officials of the countries dealing with this issue. How many times have they said that there is no military solution to this war, this conflict? First of all, they tried to convince us. Secondly, they tried to prevent us from resolving the issue by military means.<sup>11</sup> Of course, we also tried to resolve this issue peacefully, but to really resolve it. But we could see that negotiation tactics lead to the freezing of the issue, and of course we could never agree with that.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the Azerbaijani people united and fulfilled the historic mission. The road to war went in many directions. First of all, we had to equip our army with the necessary weapons and equipment. This also required a strong economy. When Azerbaijan gained independence, our financial and economic situation was very difficult. Therefore, building a strong economy was an important factor in winning the war, and we did it. Our economy has strengthened, we live at our own expense, we do not need anyone's help, we do not depend on anyone, we build our life to the best of our abilities and do it well.

Now the economic processes, difficulties, and crises taking place in different parts of the world show that the Azerbaijani economy is a stable economy. The country that emerged from such a difficult war has undertaken large-scale construction work on the liberated lands for two years. The financial source of all these works is the budget of Azerbaijan. During these two years, we have not received a single *manat* [the national currency of Azerbaijan] from any country, organization, or donor. Of course, if someone wants to help, we wouldn't mind. But no one

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<sup>11</sup> Aliev here is signaling that he is willing to go to war to achieve his goals of territorial aggrandizement, even against international advice and pressure.

<sup>12</sup> Throughout the entire negotiation process after 1994, Azerbaijan itself rejected the proposals of the OSCE Minsk Group, which would have resolved the issue peacefully. Aliyev demanded, among other things, the annexation of Artsakh to Azerbaijan.gma

helps us and never will.<sup>13</sup> A strong economy is one of the main factors in building an army. We did it, we created it, and we have completely eliminated economic dependence. If we were economically dependent on someone, we would not be able to end the war successfully.

At the same time, we had to expose the aggressive policy of Armenia.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the international media resources controlled by Armenia, corrupt politicians, their supporters abroad, and the Armenian lobby have created such an opinion that Azerbaijan is an aggressor. When Azerbaijani lands were occupied, some countries imposed sanctions against us. We actually did not use our diplomatic capabilities. Therefore, we had to prove to the whole world that we are right, justice is on our side, international law is on our side. That is why we have been very active in the political arena. Leading international organizations - the UN, the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe], the European Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Council of Europe - adopted decisions and resolutions supporting our position, i.e. expressing justice. It created a very important international legal framework.<sup>15</sup>

In parallel with that, we have established close relations of cooperation with many countries in a bilateral format, both in our region and on other continents. Only nine EU member states and other countries have signed declarations of strategic partnership with Azerbaijan. This is one third of the EU member states. These international relations and the international reputation of Azerbaijan allowed us to get more partners, and at the same time we conveyed the truth to the international community about Karabakh and the Armenian occupation. In general, the international attitude towards the 44-day war was positive. True, some pro-Armenian countries

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<sup>13</sup>Turkey accounted for 2.9 percent of Azerbaijan's imports of major arms over the decade 2011–20. Deliveries from Turkey to Azerbaijan in this period included armored patrol vehicles, rocket artillery, missiles and armed UAVs. The fact that during the war the Azerbaijani army was led by Turkish generals, and Turkish military and Syrian terrorists took direct part in the fighting is no longer a secret. When fighting began, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that Turkey would continue to support Azerbaijan "with all its resources and heart." The armed UAVs, which were delivered shortly before the 2020 war, included at least five Bayraktar-TB2 UAVs armed with MAM-L guided bombs. Turkey also transported hundreds of Syrian rebel fighters to the front lines to fight for Azerbaijan. Israel accounted for 27 percent of Azerbaijan's imports of major arms over the decade 2011–20. Most of these deliveries took place in 2016–20, with Israel accounting for 69 percent of Azerbaijan's imports of major arms in that period. While there is sufficient information available publicly to determine the types of weapon supplied by Israel to Azerbaijan, little is known about the actual number of arms transferred. Pakistan also provided military and diplomatic assistance to Azerbaijan.

<sup>14</sup>On December 10, 1991, a nationwide referendum on the political future of Artsakh was held in the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic), as a result of which the overwhelming majority of the voters (99.89%) voted for independence. The referendum was held in full compliance with the national legislation in force at the time as well as with democratic procedures and the norms of international law.

<sup>15</sup>For years, Azerbaijan has tried to convince the international community that Artsakh is a part of Azerbaijan. However, it was never a part of Azerbaijan, even during the Soviet Union it was an Autonomous Region, which had all the rights to become independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

and countries having close ties with Armenia have tried to take some political steps against us. But that didn't yield any result. Because we have been receiving strong international support over the years.<sup>16</sup> We were elected chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. Our chairmanship was approved by a unanimous decision. Our chairmanship was also extended for another year by unanimous decision. It is an international organization that unites most of the world community. 120 countries are members of this organization. We have established close relations with Muslim countries and managed to explain to them that Armenia pursues an aggressive policy not only against us, but also against the entire Muslim world. Muslim countries cannot be friends with a country that destroys mosques.<sup>17</sup> The leaders of Muslim countries cannot accept those who destroy mosques, can they? Can they hug and kiss them? This is hypocrisy, this is betrayal. It has no other name. That is why we have isolated Armenia from the main pillars of the Muslim world. It is true that we could not completely isolate them, there are other reasons for this - the hypocrisy that I spoke about. However, in general, Armenia was known in the Muslim world as a country that destroys and insults mosques. We did it.<sup>18</sup>

We had a very active policy on patriotic issues. We have raised our younger generation in the spirit of patriotism, which was one of the main directions of my policy as President, and we have achieved this. Our youth is patriotic, attached to the Motherland, and the Second Karabakh War showed this. I want to say it again that our youth, who had never seen Karabakh, were ready to die for Karabakh, the ideas of national unity and national solidarity prevailed in our society.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, as a result of my policy, all the peoples living in Azerbaijan have become more united. I have said many times and I say today that we are a big family. All peoples living in Azerbaijan are members of one big family. We are together in good and bad times, and this unity is a rare value all over the world. We see dissatisfaction, conflicts, mistrust on national, religious and ethnic grounds in other countries. What we see in Azerbaijan is unity,

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<sup>16</sup> These comments demonstrate how important Aliev's impunity in the international sphere has been in convincing him of the righteousness of his cause as well as his ability to pursue an aggressive military strategy without significant pushback.

<sup>17</sup> Aliev is referring here to mosques destroyed under the Soviet Union, when the state policy of denying all religions was equally applied to all religious bodies and many Christian churches were also destroyed.

<sup>18</sup> By falsifying history, the Azeri government has tried to give the land conflict a religious character, turning the struggle of Artsakh Armenians for the right to self-determination into a struggle between Christians and Muslims. Armenia has many friends in the Muslim world.

<sup>19</sup> For years, the Azerbaijani authorities have spread anti-Armenian hatred within their society and especially among the youth in the name of "patriotism." Azerbaijani state officials at the highest level have frequently been involved in fuelling anti-Armenian xenophobia and hatred, glorifying murderers of Armenians, and contributing to the increase of the divide between the two nations. Armenophobia is also deeply embedded in Azerbaijani educational materials and literature, ensuring that anti-Armenian sentiments are introduced and nurtured in the population from early childhood.

brotherhood, friendship! All peoples living in Azerbaijan were prepared to die for Karabakh. This is our great value. We must constantly protect and strengthen this value. The second Karabakh war further strengthened national solidarity and national unity in our country, it strengthened our country.<sup>20</sup> We have thrown off this heavy burden from our shoulders, we got rid of that stigma. We now hold our heads high and perform at any event, in any format. We live as a proud, victorious nation. We owe it to you and tens of thousands of such military personnel. The Azerbaijani people know this and highly appreciate it.

Of course, in order to succeed in the war, we had to implement very important projects, and we did it. Today, it is enough to look at the energy and transport maps of the world and our region, so that everyone can see what benefit our country and our partners have brought from the projects implemented on our initiative. There are dozens of countries that participate in transport and energy projects on our initiative. Now it will become more widespread, and all these countries are our natural friends and allies. At the same time, these projects have created additional financial opportunities for us. First of all, we directed these financial opportunities to strengthen our military potential. If we look at the state budget expenditures during my presidency, we will see that military spending comes first. However, the country has other needs. We have also solved the problems of about a million internally displaced people and provided them with new houses. We had to raise wages, salaries, pensions, and we did. We wanted and want to increase them even more. But, above all, we provided great financial support to the army, primarily the path to victory. The same is relevant today. The state budget of Azerbaijan for the next year has reached a record level, including funds allocated for military purposes. You can ask why, the war ended, two years have passed. The answer is very simple. Revanchist forces are rising in Armenia. Forces and circles appear in Armenia that don't want to come to terms with the outcome of the war. Armenia does not fully comply with the Statement of November 10, 2020, has not fully withdrawn its armed forces from Karabakh, has

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<sup>20</sup>Azerbaijan has an authoritarian regime controlled by the Aliyev family, which has been in power for almost three decades. The extremely limited environment in which independent media operates in Azerbaijan has become even more repressive in the past decade. Changes in the laws governing the media have allowed the government to prosecute social media users for dissenting opinions online. Ethnic minorities are also under great pressure in Azerbaijan.

not provided us with the Zangezur corridor,<sup>21</sup> and periodically commits military provocations against us.<sup>22</sup> Of course, we must be ready, and we are ready.

I can say that over the past two years our Armed Forces have become stronger. Structural reforms were conducted, and the new formations were created and the number of existing formations was increased. They have been supplied with weapons, ammunition and new equipment at the highest level. The current Azerbaijani Army is stronger than the Azerbaijani Army two years ago, and everyone, Armenia, and everyone, should know this!

Therefore, the road leading to victory passed through different directions. Of course, the top priority was to create a strong Armed Forces, and we have created it. In parallel with this, internal stability, peace and security in the country for many years have strengthened us. Because, I say it again, I don't want to compare - but in the modern world it is impossible to hide anything - many countries are struggling with internal problems, in many countries there is an internal crisis, mutual distrust, violation of public order, a gap between the people and the authorities. What we see in our country is internal stability, national unity, national solidarity, and people's power unity. This is a great result of our policy. All our steps and all my steps as president from 2003 to the present day are aimed at strengthening Azerbaijan. Before the patriotic war, all my steps served the goal of liberating our land, expelling the enemy from our land, and we succeeded. I spoke during the occupation, I said several times that each of us should bring closer the day of freedom, we brought this holy day closer and closer with our work. We dealt the enemy such a crushing blow that they still cannot recover. Look at the processes taking place in Armenia, now they are already sharing their anger and poison among themselves. Look at what processes have been going on there over these two years.

Armenia should not forget the lessons of the second Karabakh war, and they should know that playing with fire will cost them dearly.<sup>23</sup> If someone in Armenia, be it the government, the opposition, or some element sent or trained from abroad, again intends to have some bad ideas

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<sup>21</sup>Deliberately distorting the provisions for unblocking regional infrastructure enshrined in the Trilateral Statements from November 9, 2020, and January 11, 2021, Azerbaijan circulates the idea of a so-called "corridor" through Syunik and threatens Armenia with the use of force to obtain it, which not only contradicts the letter and spirit of the trilateral statements, but also aims to undermine efforts of de-escalation in the region.

<sup>22</sup> The accusation of military provocations by Armenia is frequently made by Azerbaijan to justify and hide its own military maneuvers and attacks against Armenia. For example, right before Azerbaijan attacked the recognized sovereign Republic of Armenia on 13 September 2022, it accused Armenia of military provocations, accusations that were proven false.

<sup>23</sup> Aliev's vague threats to Armenia and Armenians are full of bombast like this, but they nonetheless should be taken very seriously given the behavior of Azerbaijani troops in the 2020 war and 2022 aggression.

against us, he will again see our fist, and the history of the last two years has shown this. Even this year, the Parukh operation<sup>24</sup>, the events of September 13-14 on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border - all this should be a lesson for Armenia.<sup>25</sup> We have given them this lesson and we hope that they will finally understand it, bend their necks and deal with their internal affairs, will not lay eyes on our land, will not lay eyes on Karabakh. Karabakh is our land.<sup>26</sup> Russian peacekeepers are temporarily stationed there, the November 10, 2020 Statement states their term, and if they (Armenians) rely on anyone, they will still face tragedy.<sup>27</sup>

We always respect all international agreements. We are fair people and a fair country. If we make a commitment, we fulfill it. We are fulfilling all the obligations assumed in the Statement of November 10, 2020, we have been fulfilling them for two years already,<sup>28</sup> but is Armenia fulfilling them? No! Immediately after the second Karabakh war, they were just so frightened that they complied with these provisions and the occupied territories of Agdam [Akna], Kalbajar [Qavratchar] and Lachin [Berdzor] regions were returned to us without a single shot. If they hadn't returned it, we'd have crushed their heads again.<sup>29</sup> But after that? After that, they began to delay time again. I would like to reiterate that this commitment has not yet been fully

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<sup>24</sup>On March 24, at 16:00, the Azerbaijani armed forces broke the line of contact in the direction of the village of Parukh of the Askeran region of Artsakh and advanced towards the positions of Karaglukh. On the night of March 25, they opened fire on the units of the Armenian Defense Forces, as a result of which 5 contract servicemen from the Armenian side were wounded. From noon on March 25, units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces used in addition strike drones, including Bayraktar TB-2, to attack. From the Armenian side, 3 contract soldiers were killed and 14 were injured. On March 29, the Azerbaijani troops left Parukh, and Russian peacekeepers were stationed there, but Azerbaijani soldiers still continue to remain on part of the Karaglukh positions.

<sup>25</sup> Aliev is threatening a renewed illegal war of aggression against the recognized sovereign state of the Republic of Armenia here.

<sup>26</sup>This is a common claim made by Azerbaijani authorities and a key feature of Azerbaijani nationalism. The area known as Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), part of which is now occupied by Azerbaijan, has never been a full part of Azerbaijan nor has it ever been inhabited by a majority of Azeris. The region has historically been over 75 percent Armenian and the people have continuously claimed independence since the fall of the Russian empire in 1917.

<sup>27</sup>These are open threats against Armenia and the Armenian identity, which express hostility to the entire Armenian people. The term "tragedy"[*faciə*] is used by Turkey and Azerbaijan to refer to the Armenian Genocide, which they do not recognize but routinely vow to continue. Thus, this euphemism is an expression of the genocidal policy of Azerbaijan.

<sup>28</sup>Armenia and Artsakh have consistently implemented the provisions of the Trilateral Statement. Azerbaijan, by contrast, has not. Just a month after the signing of the Trilateral Statement, and despite the commitment by all sides to stop in their current positions at the time of signing, Azerbaijani armed forces infiltrated into Khtsaber and Hin Tagher villages of the Hadrut region of Artsakh, killing and capturing Armenian servicemen. Moreover, after the withdrawal of the Armenian troops from the regions mentioned in the document, the Azerbaijani side responded with the infiltration and continued illegal deployment of its armed units into the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia from the very same territories. Azerbaijan has not yet implemented paragraph 8 of the November 9 Statement, holding numerous Armenian prisoners of war, hostages, and other detained persons in captivity, which is not only a gross violation of the Trilateral Statement but also of international humanitarian law. Armenia has returned all of its POWs as required by the agreement.

<sup>29</sup> This vulgar violent language is a key feature of genocidal ideologies and regimes. It is often used by Azeri authorities to refer to the treatment of Armenians.

fulfilled. What are the Armenian armed forces doing in Karabakh? Our patience is not unlimited, and I want to once again warn that if this obligation is not fulfilled, Azerbaijan will take the necessary steps.<sup>30</sup>

Armenia has assumed responsibility for the Zangezur corridor. For two years we have not touched the cars going from Armenia to Karabakh and back along the Lachin (Berdzor) road. We are committed to our commitment to free movement. Armenia also undertook to provide road communication between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Two years have passed, there is no feasibility study, there is no movement, no railway, no road. How long do we have to wait?

The events of September 13-14 did not just happen.<sup>31</sup> Of course, Armenia has committed another military provocation against us.<sup>32</sup> But our response was also very effective. Our response could have been a little less if they had fulfilled their obligations. Our response could be tougher if we wanted a new war. We don't want this; we don't want bloodshed. We simply want respect for our rights.<sup>33</sup>

After the September 13-14 operation, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces were deployed at key strategic heights in the direction of the Azerbaijani-Armenian border. Armenia should understand well what this means. Today, from these strategic heights, we can see the cities of Garakilsa, Gafan, Gorus and Istisu.<sup>34</sup> We are on the shore of Lake Small Goycha.<sup>35</sup> Big Goycha Lake<sup>36</sup> is also in front of our eyes. All these are realities.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The Trilateral Statement that ended the 2020 war did not commit Armenia to handing over Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) to Azerbaijan.

<sup>31</sup> Azerbaijani Armed Forces launched a major attack on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia on September 13-14, 2022. The attack, the worst escalation in tensions since the end of the 2020 Artsakh War, left 207 Armenian soldiers dead or missing, 293 injured, three civilians dead, and resulted in documented cases of horrific war crimes committed by Azerbaijani troops. Twenty more Armenian POWs who are now in Azerbaijani captivity. Azerbaijani attacks also targeted civilian settlements and infrastructure in Armenia's regions of Syunik, Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor, causing significant damage.

<sup>32</sup> This assertion, that Azerbaijani aggression is "provoked" by Armenia, has been proven false in this and other cases of Azerbaijani violations of the Trilateral Statement.

<sup>33</sup> This blaming of the victim is typical of genocidal rhetoric and echoes Turkish denialism of the Armenian Genocide, which claims that the Ottoman Empire was operating in self-defense when it massacred and killed up to 1.2 million Armenians.

<sup>34</sup> These are the invented Azerbaijani names of Armenian cities of Sisian, Kapan, Goris and Jermuk.

<sup>35</sup> This is an invented Azerbaijani name for Lake Sevan in the Republic of Armenia.

<sup>36</sup> This is also an invented Azerbaijani name for Lake Sevan in the Republic of Armenia.

<sup>37</sup> On 13-14 September Azerbaijan launched a large-scale invasion of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia with the use of heavy artillery, rocket launchers, and drones. The armed forces of Azerbaijan shelled 36 settlements and communities deep in the sovereign territory of Armenia, including the cities of Goris, Jermuk,

We have created these realities after the patriotic war. Why? First of all, in response to the military provocations of Armenia, on the other hand, to prevent military provocations in the future. Because most of the posts of Armenia are visible from the heights I mentioned, and if there is a concentration of forces there, we will see it and take immediate measures. At the same time, because Armenia does not fulfill its international obligations. Armenia was defeated in the Second Karabakh War and its army was destroyed. A defeated country cannot behave like this.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, all our steps are justified. True, some foreign supporters of Armenia want to accuse us of something. I gave their answer. If they ban something else, I will answer them anyway. It won't stop me. The fact is that we demand our rights, and the fact that Azerbaijan is right is not questioned by major international players.<sup>39</sup>

In short, for two years after the war we continued our policy. For two years we have done a lot of construction work, we are actually restoring Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur<sup>40</sup> and will continue to do so. At the same time, we are strengthening and will continue to strengthen our Army. Armenia should know that it is not the statement of some sponsors of Armenia that keeps us within the current framework, but our own policy. We are not afraid of anyone.<sup>41</sup> If we were afraid of someone, we would never have started the Second Karabakh War. Each of us was going to die, either freedom or death! Now we are ready to go to death demanding our rights. Because still - even though the war ended two years ago - there are disturbing moments and I want to appeal to the Armenian people and say my word. They are now seeing the pain

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Vardenis, Kapan. The armed forces of Azerbaijan continue to illegally control dozens of square kilometers of the territory of Armenia. This statement is a renewed threat to Armenia's territorial integrity.

<sup>38</sup>This comment demonstrates that Aliyev is not interested in international law or the 2020 Ceasefire agreement, which was negotiated to end the 44-Day War, but rather that he operates from the principle that "might makes right" and is seeking domination and possible eradication of Armenia in the South Caucasus.

<sup>39</sup> Again, Aliyev signals that the silence of the international community has emboldened him.

<sup>40</sup>Zangezur is one of the regions of Armenia, and the Azerbaijani-Turkish cooperation has set its sights on it. After the military aggression of Azerbaijan and Turkey in the fall of 2020, the Aliyev administration devised the insidious propaganda tactic of creating a fictitious Azeri region called "Eastern Zangazur," "Zangazur" for short, which corresponds in part to the Syunik region of Armenia. Syunik connects Armenia to its ally, Iran, in the south, and also runs between two parts of Azerbaijan. In other words, Azeri authorities are instilling in both ordinary Azerbaijanis and Western politicians who do not understand much about regional issues the notion that "Zangazur is a native Azerbaijani land." In this way, grounds are being prepared for Azerbaijani territorial claims. By using Azerbaijani toponyms, the president of Azerbaijan voices territorial claims against Armenia on a regular basis. These claims are supported by Turkey, which has had long-standing desires dating back to the early 20th century to clear a path of Turkish domination to Central Asia through historic Armenian territory. This imperial Pan-Turkic ideology has been taken up by current Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a cornerstone of Turkey's foreign policy in the region.

<sup>41</sup> Aliyev is threatening the international community here as well, suggesting that any efforts to prevent Azerbaijan from achieving its territorial aggrandizement at the expense of Armenia and Armenians will result in a new and brutal war.

of these thirty years of occupation.<sup>42</sup> What is the occupation, what is the loss, they see now. We simply responded to them, we fought for our land, we expelled the aggressor from our land. They need to understand this so as not to become a victim of the circles who sit abroad and want to consider this region as a playground for the second time. We have the main power here. Our Army has shown heroism, professionalism, and dedication. If necessary, we will show it again, we will achieve what we want, everyone knows this, and those who conduct military exercises in support of Armenia on our border should also know this. Nobody can scare us. If Armenia wants to conduct a good neighborhood policy, first of all, it must fulfill all the provisions of the Statement of November 10, 2020.<sup>43</sup> It must be sincere in the peace talks with Azerbaijan. It should not artificially delay time, should not wait for a miracle that someone will come and fight in their place. No one will come and fight instead of them, even if they come and fight, they will still see the Azerbaijani Army in front of them.

We want peace, we don't want war. Peace, but just peace. The terms we put forward are fair, based on international law, and the peace treaty must be signed on the basis of these terms. If Armenia shows goodwill, it will be signed, if not, it will not be signed. Life will show what will happen next.

All I said has a basis - our strong will and victory in the patriotic war! This victory allows us to say these words in front of everyone, in the eyes of those who ignore us. This victory gave us this opportunity, gave confidence and spirit to all our people. We have restored not only our territorial integrity, but also our national pride. Therefore, dear soldiers, we owe you, owe to tens of thousands of such soldiers and officers, and the Azerbaijani people know this well. I am also proud of you as the commander-in-chief.

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<sup>42</sup>Aliev is here referring to the period after the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1991-1994), when Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh and a buffer zone of formerly Azerbaijani territories became a de facto independent state allied with Armenia. Azerbaijan declared war on Artsakh in 1991 because the territory, formerly an Armenian autonomous oblast of the Soviet Union under Azerbaijani control, had declared independence. Azerbaijan claims that Armenia was illegally occupying Azeri land from 1994 to 2020 and implies that Armenia is currently occupying the remaining territory of Artsakh still under Armenian control after 2020. The claim of illegal occupation is meant to negate the claims ethnic Armenians have to self-determination and, importantly, to protection and security, which Azerbaijan has proven it cannot provide.

<sup>43</sup>The claim that Armenia has not fulfilled all of the provisions of the Ceasefire Agreement of November 10, 2020, are consistently made by Azerbaijan to curry international favor; however, the "provisions" referred to were left intentionally vague in order that they could be subject to further negotiation. In contrast, Azerbaijan has not returned all Armenian POWs as required by Provision 9 of the November 10, 2020, agreement.