

APPEAL
*to the world community, religious leaders,
and international organizations*

We, the leaders of faith-based groups of Azerbaijan, strongly condemn the 12 July act of military aggression carried out by the Armenian armed forces and the use of heavy artillery to deliberately and continuously shell civilians, population centres and religious temples in the Tovuz District section of the Azerbaijani-Armenian state border. We call on the world community, religious leaders, and international organizations to strongly deplore the provocation.

As a result of the military escapade by Armenia, soldiers of the Azerbaijani armed forces were killed and wounded, and a 76-year-old civilian lost his life. State and private properties were severely damaged. Armenia endangered strategic transport and oil and gas pipeline projects along the East-West transport corridor that promote the development and prosperity of the region.

The clash on the border is part of Armenia's policy of occupation against Azerbaijan that has lasted for almost 30 years. Armenia has occupied Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding regions in gross violation of the norms and principles of international law. Bloody ethnic cleansing was carried out against Azerbaijani people in the occupied territories. The Khojaly tragedy, which is recognized by the legislatures of more than 10 countries as an act of genocide and was committed by the Armenian armed forces, is a crime against humanity. The rich history and the material, cultural and religious heritage of the Azerbaijani people are being vandalized and destroyed in the territories occupied by Armenia.

Armenia's goal is to create a new hotbed of tension in the region, thwart a negotiated settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and disrupt the negotiation process mediated by the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

While the entire world was fighting a terrible scourge like coronavirus, Armenia carried out this heinous provocation deliberately and in a pre-planned manner. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had put forward a global ceasefire initiative amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Armenia's backing this initiative in words, but in reality committing a bloody act of military aggression on the border between the two countries is hypocrisy and disrespect for the international community.

The United Nations is an international organization that has consistently safeguarded international law and fundamental human rights. Armenia has not yet honoured the four resolutions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict that were passed by an influential international organization like the United Nations, which marks the 75th anniversary of its establishment this year. The resolutions demand that Armenian troops be pulled out of Azerbaijan's occupied areas completely and

without preconditions. Taking steps to ensure the implementation of these resolutions could boost the UN's prestige and value in the run-up to its glorious anniversary. There is a need for the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group to take substantial and result-oriented steps based on the norms and principles of international law and historical justice toward the implementation of the resolutions.

Equating the occupier with the party that has been subjected to occupation cannot help resolve the conflict. It is the duty of everyone without exception to observe international law and norms. The use of weapons against the civilian population is a continuation of the ongoing military aggression by the Armenian state and of ethnic cleansing and terrorist acts committed against the Azerbaijani people.

Armenian lobby groups and terrorist organizations are organizing mass acts of violence against Azeris in many cities and capitals of the world on the basis of ethnic discrimination, hatred and extreme chauvinism, and attacking embassies and consulates-general of the Republic of Azerbaijan. We call on the law-enforcement and judicial authorities of those countries to investigate those criminal acts thoroughly and impartially.

Based on eternal human values that do not let the globe come off its axis, religious figures should always advocate peace and understanding across the world. Our homeland, Azerbaijan, is one of the few countries where a peaceful coexistence of different religions is a daily fact of life and where multiculturalism is a way of life. Our responsibility before the One Creator motivates us, the leaders of faith-based groups, to support efforts for peace and for a just solution to existing problems. However, the path to peace and understanding is not easy and requires a lot of hard work, strong will and efforts joined.

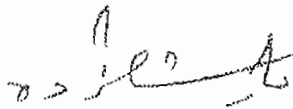
Ever since the conflict began, Russian Orthodox Church mediated a number of meetings between Azerbaijani and Armenian religious leaders toward making peace. The communications that aimed to step up mutual trust in order to achieve a peaceful coexistence helped prevent the conflict from escalating to an inter-religious level. Fair and lasting peace is only possible if there are good and sincere intentions. However, unfortunately, the Armenian provocations once again result in the disruption of the negotiation process toward a peaceful settlement of the conflict. All political and legal responsibility for this provocation lies with Armenia.

All Abrahamic religions consider the killing of peaceful and innocent people to be the gravest crime. We call on the international community to give a strong reaction to the unacceptable killing of civilians by the Armenian armed forces in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and in our seven districts around it and also during their latest military provocations on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border, to strongly condemn the acts of aggression and provocation, and to join efforts to

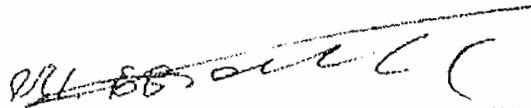
prevent these kinds of incidents and establish fair peace. Our duty and responsibility before the Creator and before our peoples makes us, religious leaders, responsible to make efforts for the sake of peace and mercy and for the resolution of existing problems. Meanwhile, we highly appreciate the concern of the leader of the world's Catholics, His Holiness Pope Francis, over the escalation of military tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus region and his prayers for the families of those killed in the latest fighting. We share the Pontiff's hope that, as he put it, with the help of the international community, "through dialogue and the goodwill of the parties, a lasting peaceful solution to the conflict can be reached, which has at heart the good of those beloved populations".

We hope that a just solution will soon be found to the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through the efforts of the world's religious leaders, international organizations and the support of the world community and based on the norms and principles of international law.

May the Almighty Creator establish peace and tranquillity on Earth!
Amen!



Sheikhulislam Allahshukur PASHAZADEH
Chairman of the Caucasus Muslims' Board



Melih YEVDAYEV
Head of Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan



Robert MOBILI
Chairman of the Albanian-Udi
Christian religious community



Aleksandr SHAROVSKI
Head of the Baku religious community
of the European Jews

Baku, 24 July 2020