

Statement by the Spokesperson of the MFA on the 27th anniversary of the occupation of the Lachyn district of the Republic of Azerbaijan

27 years ago on May 18, 1992 Lachyn district, which was not part of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast of Azerbaijan, was occupied by the armed forces of Armenia.

As a continuation of the policy of military aggression pursued by the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan, the occupation of Lachyn was resulted in the ethnic cleansing of the inhabitants of the region and currently 77.518 Lachyn residents live as internally displaced persons (IDP) in different regions of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian occupation has also inflicted serious damage to state and private property of Lachyn region. 217 cultural, 101 educational, 142 healthcare, 462 commercial enterprises and 30 communications, 2 transport and various other production facilities were plundered and destroyed.

Many historical monuments of world and national significance have been subjected to vandalism by Armenia. Among them the sixth century Albanian Aghoghlan cloister and the fourteenth century Malik Ajdar tomb, the mosque in Garygyshlag village and the ancient cemetery in Zabukh village were destroyed; the Lachyn Museum of History and its unique collection of ancient gold, silver and bronze artefacts were plundered.

Armenia, blatantly violating international humanitarian law, as well as its commitments under the Geneva Conventions continues the illegal actions in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including its Lachyn district; geographic names of the region are changed, natural resources are exploited, illegal infrastructural changes are carried out, deliberate resettlement policy with the aim altering the region's demographic situation is implemented.

On June 16, 2015 the European Court of Human Rights in the case of "Chiragov and others v. Armenia" ruled in favor of Azerbaijani nationals who were forcibly displaced from the occupied Lachyn district of Azerbaijan, recognizing continuing violations by Armenia of a number of their rights under the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, namely, those relating to the protection of property (Article 1 of Protocol No. 1), the right to respect for private and family life (Article 8 of the Convention) and the right to an effective remedy (Article 13 of the Convention).

Of particular importance is the determination by the Court, in paragraphs 19-20, that the district of Lachyn, in particular the town of Lachyn, was under military attack; that in mid-May 1992, Lachin was subjected to aerial bombardment, in the course of which many houses were destroyed; that the town was looted and burned; that Lachin and the surrounding villages were completely destroyed during the military conflict.

The UN Security Council adopted resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 in 1993. The UNSC resolutions condemned the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and

reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders. In those resolutions, the Security Council also confirmed that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is part of Azerbaijan, and demanded immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Instead of implementing demands of UNSC resolutions, as well as the decisions and resolutions of other international organizations Armenia pursues the policy of annexation of occupied lands of Azerbaijan.

Armenia must understand that maintaining under the occupation of Azerbaijan's lands would never produce political outcome desired by Armenia. *Status-quo* based on the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories is unsustainable and unacceptable. Sustainable, democratic development of the region and Armenia itself in peace, stability and security environment is highly dependent on abiding by international law, elimination of the military occupation factor and restoration of the fundamental rights of IDPs. Only complete and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions of Azerbaijan and return of the Azerbaijani IDPs to their homelands will provide necessary conditions for the establishment of normal neighborhood relations between the two countries and restoration of lasting peace, security and prosperity in the region.

Restoration of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders, and ensuring rights of the Azerbaijani IDPs, including those from Lachyn region to return to their native lands and eliminating the grave consequences of the conflict along being the commitment of the international community is an unconditional right of Azerbaijan under the Charter of the UN.