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OCCUPATION OF SHUSHA

On May 6, 2005 Milli Mejlis (Parliament) of Azerbaijan adopted a statement on the 13th anniversary of the occupation of the city of Shusha of the Republic of Azerbaijan by the armed forces of Armenia and appealed to the international community to exert pressure on Armenia to put an end to the occupation of Azerbaijani lands.

Shusha, one of the pivotal centers of the culture and art of Azerbaijan, was founded in 1756 by the ruler of the independent Karabakh Khanate of Azerbaijan, Panahali Khan Javanshir as the capital of the Khanate. Since that time, this city has played an important role in the political, economic and cultural life of Azerbaijan. Before the Armenian occupation, the majority of city's population was Azerbaijani.

The occupation of the city of Shusha was one the phases of the Armenian military aggression conducted with the purpose of annexing the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. It was committed in perfidious manner while the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiated in Tehran on May 7-8, 1992 and signed a communiqué at the end of the meeting with the purpose to normalize the situation around the conflict.

The fall of Shusha was preceded by the massacre in Khojaly and followed by the occupation of other Azerbaijani regions, including Lachin, located outside the Nagorno-Karabakh region. That proved the intention of the Armenian side to expand its aggression against Azerbaijan and engage in the policy of ethnic cleansing. After the occupation of Shusha, the Armenian forces followed their established pattern of ethnic cleansing by forcibly exiling more than 20 thousands people.

Many international organizations expressed their concern over the expansion of the Armenian military actions. The NATO North Atlantic Council in its statement on 22 May 1992 condemned the use of force and stressed that "any action against Azerbaijan's or any other state's territorial integrity or to achieve political goals by force would represent a flagrant and unacceptable violation of the principles of international law".

Nowadays, Armenian occupants try to falsify the history and deface the cultural and architectural heritage of the city of Shusha. Armenia, with the assistance of the Armenian diaspora which has established the so-called "Shushi" fund, destroys Azerbaijan's material heritage, changes the architecture and conducts excavation in the city and surrounding areas.

The future fate of Shusha and return of its displaced community are an important part of any comprehensive settlement of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Still, ten years after being exiled from home, people of Shusha remain scattered among Azerbaijan's one million refugees and displaced persons.