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**RUSSIAN MFA MAKES STATEMENT ON ANNIVERSARY OF APRIL ESCALATION IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH**

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The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing countries and international organizations made active efforts to stabilize the situation after last years April escalation along the line of contact between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops in Nagorno-Karabakh, said Russian Foreign Ministrys spokesperson Maria Zakharova.

She made the remarks while commenting on the anniversary of the April battles during a briefing on April 5, an APA correspondent reported from Moscow.

Zakharova noted that the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs and other mediators have also done everything possible to help the parties return to the negotiation process.

Last years summits in Vienna and St. Petersburg were dedicated to the resolution of the conflict, she added.

We expect that the parties will return to the negotiating table and resume the dialogue aimed at achieving a sustainable settlement, said Zakharova, stressing that the work is going on in this direction.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict entered its modern phase when the Armenian SSR made territorial claims against the Azerbaijani SSR in 1988.

A fierce war broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. As a result of the war, Armenian armed forces occupied some 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory which includes Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts (Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli and Zangilan), and over a million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced people.

The military operations finally came to an end when Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a ceasefire agreement in Bishkek in 1994.

Dealing with the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the OSCE Minsk Group, which was created after the meeting of the CSCE (OSCE after the Budapest summit held in December 1994) Ministerial Council in Helsinki on 24 March 1992. The Groups members include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, the United States, France, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Belarus, Finland and Sweden.

Besides, the OSCE Minsk Group has a co-chairmanship institution, comprised of Russian, the US and French co-chairs, which began operating in 1996.

Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 of the UN Security Council, which were passed in short intervals in 1993, and other resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly, PACE, OSCE, OIC, and other organizations require Armenia to unconditionally withdraw its troops from Nagorno-Karabakh.

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Kaynak/Source: