
**AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN MINISTRY ISSUES STATEMENT ON 28TH ANNIVERSARY OF
OCCUPATION OF LACHIN**

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The press service of Azerbaijan`s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a statement on the 28th anniversary of the occupation of Lachin district of Azerbaijan.

The statement reads: May 18 marks the 28th anniversary of the occupation of the Lachin district of Azerbaijan by the armed forces of Armenia.

As a result of the occupation of the Lachin district, which was not part of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast of Azerbaijan, 237 people were killed and 67 people went missing. Inhabitants of the region were subjected to ethnic cleansing and currently 77.700 Lachin residents live as internally displaced persons (IDP) in different regions of Azerbaijan.

The occupation of Lachin, as a continuation of the aggression policy of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan, has also inflicted serious damage to state and private property of the district. Thus, 217 cultural, 101 educational, 142 healthcare, 462 commercial enterprises and 30 communications, 2 transport and various other production facilities were destroyed. Many historical monuments of national and world 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 Lachin Museum of History and its unique collection of ancient gold, silver and bronze artifacts were plundered.

Like in the other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the aggressor country Armenia continues its illegal activities in Lachin district as well, grossly violating international humanitarian law, as well as its commitments under the Geneva Conventions. Geographic names of the region are changed, natural resources are exploited, illegal infrastructural changes are carried out, and deliberate resettlement policy with the aim altering the regions demographic situation is implemented.

As it is known, a decision has been adopted in favor of the Azerbaijani nationals who were forcibly displaced from the occupied Lachin district of Azerbaijan on June 16, 2015 on the case of Chiragov and others v. Armenia of European Court of Human Rights, identified 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, the right to respect for private and family life.

Ignoring the UN Security Council resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 adopted in 1993, which reaffirm the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan and demand immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, as well as numerous decisions and resolutions of other international organizations, Armenia under the cover of peaceful settlement of the conflict, tries to strengthen the dangerous status quo regime based on the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent districts of Azerbaijan and pursues the policy of annexation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

However, there is an unchanging truth that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders, including its Nagorno-Karabakh region and other adjacent districts, are recognized, as well as the consequences of the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories are unequivocally rejected by the international community. The military occupation of the Azerbaijani territories will never yield the political results pursued by Armenia. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders has not been and cannot be a subject of negotiations.

The aim of the negotiations on the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is to eliminate the consequences of the conflict, thus ending the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories and restoring the fundamental human rights of the internally displaced persons. The norms and principles of international law as enshrined in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter constitute the basis of the negotiation process for the settlement of the conflict. Armenia's speculative attempt to delay the negotiation process, thus the political settlement of the conflict by falsehood and deception, is unacceptable and poses a major obstacle to peace in the region.

Eliminating the grave consequences of the conflict along with being the commitment of the international community is an unconditional right of Azerbaijan under the Charter of the UN.

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