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## RALLY PLANNED FOR ISTANBUL ON RECOGNITION OF KHOJALY GENOCIDE

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3 February 2012 News.Az Interview with Orkhan Akbarov, head of the Azerbaijani Students and Alumni International Forum (ASAIF). Q: The anniversary of the Khojaly genocide falls on 26 February. How does your organization, which brings together Azerbaijani students and young people abroad, plan to mark the anniversary? A: I think that in the 20th century the whole world learnt from the Holocaust and other genocides. With this, everyone understood the harm of racism, nationalism and fascism. The world should assess the Khojaly genocide just as it condemned the genocide of the Jews. This year, all democratic values have been turned upside down by the bill adopted by France, which criminalized the denial of the so-called Armenian genocide. This once again gives us the right to urge the world community to recognize a terrible tragedy of modern history – the Khojaly genocide. The brutal killing of 613 civilians, the taking of thousands of people hostage and the forced displacement of one million Azerbaijani Turks cannot be overlooked. The Khojaly genocide is a common tragedy of each and every Azerbaijani, Turk, every committed Azerbaijani and those who acknowledge that the people of the world have the right to live peacefully and independently. We cannot punish the murderers just by commemorating the tragedy and mourning. We should unite. We should raise awareness about it beyond Azerbaijan. As every year, our organization plans different events in different countries in order to bring the reality of the tragedy to the world community. To this end, our young people living in different parts of the world come together and are involved in raising awareness in different ways (e-mail attacks, conferences, actions, rallies etc.). This year, we plan to hold similar events in several countries. We can highlight events planned in Lithuania, Latvia, England, France, Italy, Hungary, Spain, Holland, Belgium, Turkey and elsewhere, but we are paying special attention to a rally of thousands in Istanbul to call for the official recognition of the Khojaly genocide by the Turkish parliament. And our young people studying in other countries will try to draw the attention of the world community to this issue by holding round tables, public lectures at their universities and holding peaceful demonstrations in several cities. Q: What organizations are involved in the Istanbul demonstration? Are you satisfied with the support shown by them? A: Of course, there is support and it is continuing to grow. We are trying to spread information about this action to larger numbers so that they can support us on a larger scale. Everyone who considers themselves Azerbaijani and Turk, who loves and supports their nation and country, regardless of political sympathies, every Turk understands that this is our common cause and the main problem that the world should be aware of. To achieve justice for the 613 people brutally killed in Khojaly is our common responsibility. Everyone understands this, therefore, student and youth organizations operating in Turkey, local organizations, associations, youth wings of political parties and every young Azerbaijani living there supports it. We are grateful to them for their support. In particular, we would like to thank Vusala Mahirgizi, head of lent.az and APA information agencies, MPs Ganira Pashayeva and Jeyhun Osmanli, our youngsters studying in Turkey, and the heads of universities and student youth organizations in Istanbul and other cities for their support. Q: What form will the

action in Istanbul take? A: The action will be a mass rally. We hope that this action will be the biggest and noisiest one outside the country in the history of Azerbaijan. As for ASAIF, we plan to provide the rally with flags, posters, slogans and other campaign material. This is an event for every Azerbaijani and Turk, regardless of their political and other views. This is our common sorrow that we try to make the world community aware of. I am sure that all young Azerbaijanis will unite in Taksim Square in Istanbul and be like a single fist. The action will end with an interesting flash mob. Local and foreign media will cover the protest. It will have interesting slogans such as "Karabakh in our hearts" "we are all people of Karabakh" "Karabakh recognize it" "don't forget Khojaly!" and so on. Our aim is to make the event vibrant and noisy so that our voice reaches its audience. Q: How can our compatriots living in other countries join this rally? A: Though the event is taking place in Istanbul, everyone can join. And our many friends in Azerbaijan will head to Istanbul to support the action. It will also involve Azerbaijani students and youngsters living and studying in Europe. They can find out about it on the TÜRKiYE BUNU TANI-UNUTMA HOCALINI page on Facebook, @hepimizhocalili, @asaifpress on Twitter and send their questions and proposals to hepimizhocalili@gmail.com . In the end, I would like to note that though ASAIF is the organizer of the action, this is an event for all of

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