
PRESIDENT: AZERBAIJAN READY FOR PEACE TREATY TALKS WITH ARMENIA

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President Aliyev has said that Azerbaijan is ready to start talks on a peace agreement with Armenia, based on the mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other, Azertag has reported.

He made the remarks in a video format speech presented during the annual General Debate of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly at the level of heads of state and government on September 23.

Peace, cooperation

As the conflict is over, Azerbaijan has already announced its readiness to embark upon the border delimitation and demarcation between Azerbaijan and Armenia and to start negotiations on a peace agreement with Armenia, based on mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other. Such an agreement would turn our region into a region of peace and cooperation. However, we have not yet seen any positive reaction from Armenia regarding our proposal, the president said.

Aliyev described transportation projects as one of the areas that can serve as the cause of peace and cooperation and stressed that the Zangazur corridor will create new opportunities for the region.

Azerbaijan has created a new reality in the Southern Caucasus region which has to be taken into account by all. Armenia has to make a choice between regional cooperation and illegal and baseless territorial claims against its neighbors, he stated.

Armenian provocations

Speaking about Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani territories lasting for about 30 years, the president noted that all UN Security Council resolutions, as well as decisions adopted by relevant international organizations, demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from Azerbaijan's occupied territories had been totally ignored by Armenia.

He stressed that during the last two years of the conflict, Armenia deliberately destroyed the negotiation process. Aliyev added that in gross violation of international law, Armenia was blatantly implementing the policy of illegal settlement of ethnic Armenians mainly from the Middle East on Azerbaijan's occupied territories.

The president recalled military provocations committed by Armenia in July, August and September 2020. During the military provocation of September 27, Armenia launched a large-scale attack against military positions and civilians of Azerbaijan.

"In my statement at the General Debate of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly on 24 September last year, I had warned that, 'hostile, Azerbaijanophobic statements and provocations of Armenian leadership demonstrate that Armenia is preparing for new aggression against Azerbaijan. Three days later on September 27 last year, Armenia launched a large-scale attack against military positions and civilians of Azerbaijan. In response, Azerbaijan, using its inherent right of self-defence as enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter, started a counter-attack on its own territories against Armenia,'" Aliyev stressed.

Aliyev emphasized that during the 44-day war, Armenian troops heavily shelled Azerbaijan's regions and cities located along the frontline, as well as cities situated far away from the former frontline.

"One of the missiles was intercepted by Azerbaijani Air Defense Forces in Khizi, close to Baku, which shows that the capital city Baku was also the target of an Armenian missile attack. Armenia was using ballistic missiles, like Scud and Iskander-M, as well as forbidden white phosphorus and cluster munitions. These war crimes of Armenia resulted in more than 100 civilians, including 11 children being killed, more than 450 wounded. More than 12,000 civilian infrastructures, including private houses in Azerbaijan, have been destroyed or severely damaged," he said.

Armenian destructions

The president highlighted that during the 44-day war Azerbaijan liberated a large part of its occupied territories, i.e. more than 300 cities and villages. He stated that Armenia had to sign an act of capitulation on November 10, 2020, according to which was obliged to withdraw its troops from the remaining part of Azerbaijan's territories.

Azerbaijan resolved the 30-year-long conflict and restored its territorial integrity and historical justice by military-political means. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was left in the past. There is no administrative-territorial unit called Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, Aliyev underlined.

Furthermore, the president noted that during almost 30-year-long occupation Armenia has deliberately destroyed cities and villages, looted and plundered all cultural and religious sites of Azerbaijan.

Thus, nine Azerbaijani cities and hundreds of villages have been barbarically wiped out by Armenia. Out of 67 mosques in these territories, 65 have been razed to the ground and the remaining two have been severely damaged and desecrated.

Speaking about the ecocide committed by Armenia in the liberated lands, Aliyev underlined that

60,000 hectares of forest had been destroyed. Armenia used water reserves to create an artificial environmental crisis and has been severely polluting the transboundary river Okhchuchay. Armenia also illegally exploited natural resources, including gold and other precious metals and minerals and exported it to the international markets.

Missing persons, landmines

The president underlined that Armenia must provide information about around 4,000 Azerbaijani citizens registered as missing persons from the first Karabakh War.

We have solid proofs that almost all of them have been tortured and killed, and buried in mass graves by Armenian military in violation of international humanitarian law, he said.

Speaking about the large-scale construction work carried out in the liberated territories, the president stated that \$1.3 billion has been allocated from the state budget for this only this year.

However, Aliyev stated that the main challenge, for now, is the vast presence of landmines planted by Armenia.

Azerbaijan is among the most heavily mined countries in the world. Armenia refuses to release accurate maps of minefields. The international community must force Armenia to provide us with accurate mine maps of all liberated territories, the president stressed.

He noted that since the signing of the capitulation act by Armenia, around 30 Azerbaijani citizens, including two journalists, were killed and around 130 citizens were wounded due to the planted landmines.

Armenia must bear state responsibility for military aggression and other grave crimes committed against Azerbaijan under international law and the Charter of the United Nations, Aliyev underlined.

COVID-19

Speaking about the coronavirus pandemic, the president said that practical measures were taken to protect the population and minimize the pandemic's negative impact.

He said that Azerbaijan launched an immunization campaign in mid-January 2021. The socio-economic stimulus package worth almost \$2.7 billion had been released to support the pandemic-affected people and businesses. The country also made a voluntary financial contribution to the WHO in the amount of \$10 million, provided financial and humanitarian assistance to more than 30 countries, and more than 150,000 vaccine doses to four countries free of charge.

As a result of well-planned measures, the situation with pandemic has been kept under control and the quarantine regime has been gradually eased in our country. Azerbaijan's extensive efforts against the pandemic have been internationally recognized. In 2020, WHO hailed Azerbaijan as an exemplary country in fighting the pandemic, the president said.

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