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BEYNÖLXALQ MÜNASİBƏTLƏRİN TƏHLİLİ MƏRKƏZİ

BULLETIN

HIGHLIGHT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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I. President Ilham Aliyev delivers Victory Day speech in Shusha

On November 8, Azerbaijan celebrated Victory Day in the 44-Day War and the second anniversary of the liberation of Shusha. In his Victory Day speech in Shusha, President Ilham Aliyev warned Armenia and its foreign patrons against attempts to take revenge for Azerbaijan's victory in the 44-Day War. President Ilham Aliyev noted that Armenia should implement all the provisions of the 10 November 2020 Statement, which included the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from Karabakh and opening a transport link between mainland Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan exclave via Armenia. "The Zangazur corridor is the responsibility of Armenia. It has taken this commitment upon itself. For two years, we have not been interfering with the cars moving from Armenia to Karabakh and in the opposite direction along the Lachin road. We have taken on this commitment, we are honoring it, and there is free movement. Armenia has also undertaken to have a road connection between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Two years have passed, but there is no feasibility study, no action, no railway, and no road. How much longer are we supposed to wait?" President Ilham Aliyev wondered.

President Ilham Aliyev added that Armenia should also be sincere at the peace negotiations with Azerbaijan and should not be artificially delaying the signing of a peace treaty by relying on some foreign countries. President Ilham Aliyev said that Armenia should not pin its hopes on the Russian peacekeepers either since the latter were deployed in Karabakh temporarily. "Armenia should not forget the lessons of the Second Karabakh War. They should remember that playing with fire will cost them dearly. If

anyone there, be it the government, the opposition, or some element sent or instructed from abroad, harbors sordid intentions against us again, they will see our fist again. The history of the last two years has shown this clearly. Even this year, the Farrukh Operation, the Revenge Operation, and the 13-14 September events on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border – all these should serve as another lesson for Armenia. We have taught them this lesson, and we hope that they finally understand it, bend their necks and deal with their internal affairs, not set their sights on our lands, not set their sights on Karabakh. Karabakh is our land. Russian peacekeepers are stationed there temporarily, the 10 November 2020 Statement specifies their term, and if they rely on anyone, they will face another tragedy," President Ilham Aliyev warned.

"Armenia should understand that it is not the statements by some Armenian patron that keep us within the current frames, but our own policy. We are not afraid of anyone. We are not intimidated by anyone. If we were afraid of someone, we would never have started the Second Karabakh War," President Ilham Aliyev stressed, adding that "We have the main say here. We have the main power here. Our Army has shown heroism, professionalism, and dedication. If necessary, we will show it again, we will achieve what we want, everyone knows this, and those who conduct military exercises in support of Armenia on our border should also know this. Nobody can scare us."

"If Armenia wants to conduct a good neighborhood policy, it should first fulfill all the provisions of the 10 November 2020 Statement. It should be sincere in peace negotiations with Azerbaijan. It should not artificially delay time, it should not wait for some miracle that someone will come and fight for them. No one will come and fight in

their stead, but even if someone does come and fight, they will be confronted by the Azerbaijan Army. We want peace, we don't want war, peace, but a fair peace. The terms we are putting forward are fair and are based on international law, and the peace treaty should be signed based on these terms. If Armenia shows goodwill, it will be signed, if not, it will not be signed. Time will tell what happens next," President Ilham Aliyev concluded.

II. Azerbaijan criticizes the Russian peacekeepers over the misuse of place names

Place names are an important part of cultural identity and collective memory. They provide a connection to the past and help to preserve the history and heritage of a particular place. However, there are instances in which place names are deliberately changed in an effort to erase or suppress history, a practice known as memoricide. Memoricide is a form of cultural genocide, as it seeks to erase the history and cultural heritage of the place and the region. This can lead to a loss of cultural heritage and a sense of disconnection from one's past and roots.

Following the occupation and ethnic cleansing in the early 1990s, the Armenian state accelerated its genocidal project to erase the Azerbaijani history and cultural heritage of the region. Throughout 30 years of occupation, Armenia destroyed around 10,000 square kilometers of Azerbaijan's territory. Hundreds of villages, towns, and entire cities were looted and razed to the ground, displacing 800,000 Azerbaijanis from their homes. Armenia's deep-seated and state-sponsored anti-Azerbaijani sentiment motivated the destruction of hundreds of Azerbaijani cultural

and religious sites in an effort to erase all traces of Azerbaijani ethnicity and history from the occupied territories. Over 700 historical monuments, 22 museums, 927 libraries, 58 archeological sites, 26 fortresses, and other cultural heritage sites were destroyed, stolen, or misappropriated. Azerbaijani cultural items stolen by Armenian troops from museums in the occupied territories often ended up at auctions like Sotheby's. Moreover, Armenia intentionally demolished many mosques across the region.

Similarly, in an attempt to erase the Azerbaijani cultural heritage and history of the region, names of almost all Azerbaijani-populated cities, towns, and villages throughout the occupied territories were altered after the occupation and Armenianized. In some cases, the Armenian stated altered names of the places completely, in other cases, they tried to Armenianize them by replacing one or two letters in the original Azerbaijani names. In this way, the Armenian state attempted to erase thousands of the Azerbaijani toponyms from the map and completely falsify the historical toponymic landscape of the region. Under the occupational regime, Aghdam became "Akna", Fuzuli became "Varanda", Zangilan city became "Kovsakan", Gubadli became "Sanasar", Aghdere became "Martakert", Sugovushan became "Madagiz", Kalbajar was called "Karvachar", Lachin city became "Berdzor" and Jabrayil was renamed to "Jrakan". In 2001, the city of Khojaly, where the Armenian forces committed genocide against the Azerbaijani population of the city in 1992, was renamed to "Ivanyan" as a tribute to the former Soviet and Armenian general, Kristapor Ivanyan, who was actively involved in the First Karabakh war. In some case, the process of alteration of the Azerbaijani place names and deliberate cultural erasure started

even before the First Karabakh war. Armenia succeeded to alter and Armenianize the geographical place names within the borders of Azerbaijan during the Soviet Union before the start of military confrontations and the subsequent occupation of Azerbaijani territories. Some Azerbaijani toponyms were Armenianized during the Soviet era and under the control of Soviet authorities. For example, during the Soviet period Khojavend city became “Martuni”, Khankendi became “Stepanakert”, and etc.

After the victory in the 44-day War, one of the main priorities of the government has become to address this historical injustice and restore the Azerbaijani place names of the liberated territories in Karabakh and East Zangezur. In this context, an intentional or unintentional usage of incorrect names of Azerbaijani places, deliberately altered by the Armenian side, by external actors, generates legitimate anger and frustration in Azerbaijan.

On November 25, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan publish a press release in which it expressed a deep dissatisfaction with continued use of falsified Armenian toponyms for settlements in the Karabakh economic region by the Russian peacekeeping forces temporarily stationed in the territory of Azerbaijan. The Ministry of Defense pointed out that “Azerbaijan officially provided the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, the former and current command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent temporarily stationed in the territory of Azerbaijan, as well as the Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Center with a list and map of settlements of the Karabakh economic region of the Republic of Azerbaijan that include names corresponding to Azerbaijani toponyms. Azerbaijan has repeatedly appealed regarding the use of these names in official information. However,

unfortunately, the names of Azerbaijani settlements are mentioned with fictitious Armenian toponyms in the official information of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation published on the official website of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation. Thus, in the official information of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation dated November 24, 2022, it is stated that Azerbaijan allegedly violated the ceasefire in the direction of the settlement “Magavuz”. We inform the Russian side that the official name of the Azerbaijani settlement mentioned by them as “Magavuz” is CHARDAGLI... We call on the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent temporarily stationed in Azerbaijan to indicate correctly the toponyms of settlements on the territory of the country in the relevant information and seriously suppress all provocative actions of illegal Armenian military formations, including the mining of territories.”

On November 26, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan again warned the Russian peacekeeper against using the fabricated places names for the territories of Azerbaijan where they are temporarily stationed. The Ministry of Defense noted that “in the official information of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation published on the official website of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, the names of Azerbaijani settlements are still mentioned with fictitious Armenian toponyms. Moreover, it is undesirable to regularly mention the Karabakh economic region as the “Nagorno-Karabakh territory”. We declare once again that Azerbaijan officially provided the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, the former and current command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent temporarily stationed in the territory of Azerbaijan, as well as the Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Center

with a list and map of settlements of the Karabakh economic region of the Republic of Azerbaijan that include names corresponding to Azerbaijani toponyms. Azerbaijan has repeatedly appealed regarding the use of these names in official information. We call on the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent temporarily stationed in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan to indicate in their relevant information the names of settlements in our country's territory with the correct toponyms mentioned in our official appeal. In conclusion, we bring to the attention of the Russian side that the official names of Azerbaijani settlements, which they noted as "Mardakert" and "Martuni" in their official information dated November 26, 2022, AGHDARA and KHOJAVAND, respectively."

On November 27, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan again pointed out that the Russian peacekeepers need to use the correct names of the places and warned that it was "inadmissible" to refer to the Karabakh economic region as "Nagorno-Karabakh territory". The Ministry of Defense noted "We once again bring to the attention of the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent temporarily stationed in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan that it is necessary to refer the names of Azerbaijani settlements in the relevant information with the correct toponyms mentioned in the official documents sent to them. In the official information of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation, published on the official website of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation on 27.11.2022, the official names of the Azerbaijani settlements referred as "Mardakert" and "Martuni" are AGHDARA and KHOJAVAND, respectively."

On November 28, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan again called out the Russian

peacekeepers over the continued use of Armenian toponyms for Azerbaijani settlements. "We regretfully state that despite the numerous discontent expressed by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the names of Azerbaijani settlements are still being mentioned with Armenian toponyms in the official information of the Russian Federation's peacekeeping contingent. An end must be put to referring to the Karabakh economic region as the "Nagorno-Karabakh territory". In general, it is inadmissible to mention Azerbaijani territories with fictitious Armenian toponyms. We call on the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent temporarily stationed in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan to mention the names of Azerbaijani settlements in accordance with the official documents provided to them. In the official information of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation, published on the official website of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation on 28.11.2022, the official names of the Azerbaijani settlements referred to as "Mardakert", "Martuni", "Madagiz" and "Getavan" are respectively AGHDARA, KHOJAVAND, SUGOVUSHAN and GOZLUKORPU. For Azerbaijan, these altered place names represent the violent and oppressive history of Armenian occupation, and serve as a daily reminder of the atrocities committed against Azerbaijanis. The use of these falsified names for places causes warranted anger in Azerbaijan because it is aimed at erasing the rich cultural heritage, identity and history of the Azerbaijani people who have lived in these places for centuries," the Ministry stated in its press release.

On November 29, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan again pointed out that "[t]he disdainful attitude of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation towards

our appeals is regrettable. Due to the fact that the names of Azerbaijani settlements in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan are mentioned with fictitious Armenian toponyms, including the usage of the “Nagorno-Karabakh territory” expression, we would like to emphasize once again that this is INADMISSIBLE. We call on the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation not to use the noted inaccurate wording in official information, and we hope that our call will be respected. Moreover, we demand the correct mention of our country’s name on the map published by them. We consider it our duty to remind once again that in the official information of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation dated 29.11.2022, published on the official page of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, the territory referred to as the “Nagorno-Karabakh territory” is the Karabakh economic region, and the official names of Azerbaijani settlements mentioned as “Mardakert” and “Martuni” are AGHDARA and KHOJAVAND, respectively

For Azerbaijan, these altered place names represent the violent and oppressive history of Armenian occupation, and serve as a daily reminder of the atrocities committed against Azerbaijanis. The use of these falsified names for liberated territories causes warranted anger in Azerbaijan because it is clearly aimed at erasing the rich cultural heritage, identity and history of the Azerbaijani people who have lived in these places for centuries. Thus, all external actors, including the Russian peacekeepers temporarily stationed in the territory of Azerbaijan, should understand that Azerbaijan will never accept such blatant disregard towards Azerbaijani history, cultural heritage, and identity.

III. Armenia continues its provocations against Azerbaijan on a daily basis

Despite Azerbaijan’s best efforts to establish a more peaceful post-war regional order in the last two years since the end of the 44-Day War, Armenia continues to engage in hostilities and provocations, which could potentially lead to a permanent state of violence and instability in the region. These daily ceasefire violations show that Armenia is unwilling to leave the conflict behind and move on, further hindering the ability of the region to transform and prosper. The brazen refusal to abide by the terms of the ceasefire and the constant state of violence and uncertainty unleashed by the Armenian side continues to be a main obstacle to the advancement of the peaceful regional agenda in South Caucasus.

On November 3 at 20:15, the Armenian armed forces fired upon Azerbaijan Army positions in the Yukhari Shorzha settlement of the Basarkechar region using small arms. The Azerbaijan Army units stationed in the Bezirkhana settlement of the Kalbajar region responded with adequate retaliatory measures. On the night of November 3-4 and on November 6, the Armenian armed forces units from the positions in the directions of the Azizli and Yukhari Shorzha settlements of the Basarkechar region using various caliber weapons periodically subjected to fire for 5 hours the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of the Yellija and Mollabayramli settlements of the Kalbajar region. Starting from 18:40 on November 8 to 02:20 on November 9, the Armenian armed forces units from the positions in the directions of Yukhari Shorzha, Azizli, Yukhari Zaghali settlements of the Basarkechar region and Chinarli settlement of the Tovuzgala region using various caliber weapons

periodically subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of Mollabayramli, Yellija, Zaylik, Zaghali settlements of the Kalbajar region and Aghdam settlement of the Tovuz region. On November 11 and 14, members of illegal Armenian armed detachments in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, periodically subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the direction of the Khojavand region. On the evening of November 13, the Armenian armed forces units from the positions in the direction of the Istisu settlement using small arms subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the territory of the Kalbajar region. On November 16, at 00:50, members of an illegal Armenian armed detachment in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the territory of the Aghdam region.

On November 21, as a result of demining activities conducted by the Azerbaijan Army's engineer-sapper units, an anti-personnel minefield laid by illegal Armenian armed detachments was detected in the northern direction of the Saribaba high ground. As a result of demining measures taken in the area, 350 PMN-E anti-personnel mines produced in Armenia in 2021 were detected and neutralized in compliance with safety regulations. The command of the Russian peacekeepers and the Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Center were informed about the detected mines. At the invitation of the Azerbaijan Defense Ministry, the Commander of the Russian peacekeeping forces temporarily deployed in Azerbaijan, Major General Andrei Volkov, the head of the Turkish contingent of the Turkish-Russian Joint

Monitoring Center, Major General Fatih Akpinar, and the head of the Russian contingent of the center, Rear Admiral Oleg Semyonov, visited the mentioned territory on November 23. Starting from 22:15 on November 22 to 01:15 on November 23, the Armenian armed forces units from the positions in the directions of the Istisu settlement and Gunashli settlement of the Basarkechar region using various caliber weapons periodically subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of the Istisu settlement of the Kalbajar region and Astaf settlement of the Dashkasan region. Moreover, on November 22, starting from 15:48 to 18:20, members of an illegal Armenian armed detachment in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, periodically subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of the Shusha city and the Terter region. On November 25, starting from 09:55 to 12:10, members of an illegal Armenian armed detachment in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, periodically subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of the Aghdam and Khojavand regions. On November 26, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan announced that the quadcopter belonging to illegal Armenian armed detachments in the territory of Azerbaijan, where Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, attempted to carry out reconnaissance flights over the positions of the Azerbaijan Army Units near the Shushakend settlement of the Khojaly region and the Yeddi Khirman high ground of the Aghdam region, respectively. The Ministry of Defense reported that the Azerbaijan Army Units intercepted the detected quadcopter.

On November 26-27, members of an illegal Armenian armed detachment in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, periodically subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of the Khojavand, Fuzuli, Tartar and Aghdam regions. On November 28, the Armenian armed forces units from the positions in the directions of the Ashaghi Shorzha and Garaiman settlements of the Basarkechar region, as well as the Chinarli settlement of the Tovuzgala region using various caliber weapons periodically subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of the Yellija settlement of the Kalbajar region, the Astaf settlement of the Dashkasan region and the Aghdam settlement of the Tovuz region. Moreover, starting from 19:35 on November 27 to 08:10 on November 28, members of an illegal Armenian armed detachment in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of the Shusha, Khojavand, Khojaly and Aghdam regions. On November 30, members of an illegal Armenian armed detachment in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeepers are temporarily deployed, using various caliber weapons again periodically subjected to fire the Azerbaijan Army positions stationed in the directions of the Shusha and Aghdam regions.

A blatant disregard towards the ceasefire agreement and the continuous engagement in provocative behavior, such as laying mines in the territory of Azerbaijan, by the Armenian side is obstructing efforts for peace and stability in the region. Unwillingness of foreign powers to take a more unwavering position towards Armenian provocations in order to make sure that there is no room for ambiguity

makes Armenia even more intransigent. The lack of consistency toward this issue is utterly detrimental to the fragile post-war security situation in the South Caucasus. Armenian revanchists see the inconsistency in foreign powers' positions as a validation of their destructive aspirations, which emboldens them to take drastic steps in order to undermine the fragile peace in the region. The international community should avoid creating the perception that it may be willing to prop up revanchists. Instead, efforts should be made to explain to revanchists why their unilateral destructive actions and attempts at revisions cannot and will not be accepted. Armenia should learn to act responsibly and stop destroying the nascent peace in the region by dropping unrealistic revanchist expectations and being more aware of the potential grave consequences of its provocations.

IV. Armenia seeks to disrupt any chance of an effective peace process

On November 7, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hosted a meeting in Washington at Blair House between Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. "The United States is committed to the peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken noted ahead of the meeting. "Direct dialogue is the best way to a truly durable peace, and we are very pleased to support that," he added, commending "courageous steps by both countries to put the past behind."

However, just days after this meeting, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, seeking to completely derail the peace

process, voiced wild and baseless accusations against Azerbaijan. Responding to Pashinyan's accusations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan noted that "an attempt by Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of Armenia, during his speech of November 10, 2022 at the government meeting, to distort the speech of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Shusha of November 8, and create an impression that Azerbaijan has not fulfilled its obligations is completely groundless and unacceptable. Such an approach of the Armenian leadership is another blow to the process of normalization of relations between the two states and establishment of peace in the region."

"Accusations of Prime Minister Pashinyan against Azerbaijan on violation of international law, while turning a blind eye to Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan over the past 30 years, gross breach of the fundamental rights of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis within the framework of the occupation policy, and numerous crimes against humanity, is an ultimate level of hypocrisy. Making such baseless accusations instead of admitting the violations of international law by his country over the years, and even admitting in a certain sense the violation of the obligations undertaken by the Trilateral Statement of November 10, 2020, Armenian Prime Minister seriously calls into question Armenia's sincerity in the peace process. We remind Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan that in the 44-day war of 2020 Azerbaijan liberated its internationally recognized territories from the occupying forces and restored its territorial integrity by using the right of self-defense in accordance with the UN Charter. Armenia, on the other hand, is still refusing to implement the Trilateral Statement dated November 10, 2020, including the 4th, 6th and 9th paragraphs of the Statement, personally

signed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, thus violating its international obligations," the Head of the Press Service Department of Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry Aykhan Hajizada noted, adding that "Adequate responses by Azerbaijan to various military provocations of Armenian armed forces, which are still not completely withdrawn from the Azerbaijani territories and continue to pose a threat to the region contrary to the Trilateral Statement, are legal."

In a breach of the obligation undertaken under the 9th paragraph of the Trilateral Statement, Armenia seeks to hamper the process of unblocking of regional communications. Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan, on the other hand, genuinely fulfills its obligation by constructing the new Lachin road. The Armenian Prime Minister's baseless accusations that Baku intends to close the Lachin road is nothing more than an intentional escalation of the situation on the ground. Moreover, Armenian Prime Minister intentionally misrepresented the provision of the Trilateral Statement on Zangazur Corridor. Zangazur Corridor refers to the restoration of the historical link between Azerbaijan and its exclave Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, and this entails the use of this corridor for peaceful and humanitarian aims. According to the Trilateral Statement, Armenia has an obligation to open an unhindered connection between the western regions of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan, which means the use of the road only for people, cargos and transport, and not for military purposes, just like in the Lachin corridor.

"We bring to the attention of the Prime Minister, who accuses Azerbaijan of using the methods of terrorist organizations, that the crimes against humanity committed by the Armenian side against the Azerbaijani people during the 30-year occupation and after,

including the unprecedented acts of ethnic cleansing, urbicide and culturicide, cannot be comparable to the crimes committed by any terrorist organization. Evidence of atrocities and destruction committed by Armenia against the population, historical and cultural heritage, cities and villages, infrastructure and natural resources of Azerbaijan has been documented and presented to the international community and courts. Since the first Karabakh war, Armenian armed forces have committed unprecedented massacres not only against Azerbaijani soldiers, but also against civilians, and until today, no information has been provided about the fate of nearly 4,000 Azerbaijanis. In October 2020, crimes against humanity were committed by targeting the civilian population of the cities of Ganja, Barda, and Mingachevir in Azerbaijan. The landmine threat caused by Armenia is a serious danger to people's lives in the region today. Since November 2020 until today, 268 people, most of them civilians, were victims of landmines. The fact that the landmines exposed in Azerbaijan's territories were produced in Armenia in 2021 is a proof that Armenia continues its war crimes against Azerbaijanis by not handing over landmine maps to Azerbaijan, on the other hand by laying new landmines. The government of Armenia has not taken any practical measures to prevent the committed war crimes or bring the relevant persons to justice for the committed crimes," Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to Armenian Prime Minister.

"We remind the Prime Minister of Armenia, who wanted to avoid his obligations misinterpreting the provisions of the Trilateral Statement, and who tried to bring up the issue of "the status of Karabakh," which was not mentioned in the agreed statements in any way, that our position in this regard was voiced

by the President of Azerbaijan several times, including on international platforms: Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan, and the rights and security of the Armenian population living in this region will be ensured in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. We remind Nikol Pashinyan, who is trying to present himself as a "democracy guard," that today a wide-scale repression is carried out against political opponents in Armenia, and most of them have been convicted, while the citizens of the 3rd country expressing a critical opinion have been banned from entering the country. On the other hand, it is well known not only to Azerbaijan, but also to international mediators that the Prime Minister of Armenia has abandoned the promises and commitments he made on various international platforms. We emphasize that in accordance with the Trilateral Statement, the Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees only the safety of the movement of citizens, vehicles and cargo in both directions along the Lachin road, and the use of the road for military purposes is unacceptable. As acknowledged by Armenian officials, the Armenian armed forces have not been completely withdrawn from the territories of Azerbaijan, and the landmines produced in Armenia in 2021 are transferred to the territory of Azerbaijan. This means that Armenia continues to abuse the Lachin road for illegal military activities in contrary to paragraph 6 of the Trilateral Statement," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated.

"Additionally, accusations against Azerbaijan of obstructing the Turkiye-Armenia normalization process by the Prime Minister of Armenia, a country that does not recognize the borders of its neighbors, and whose territorial claims against Turkiye are reflected in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, is completely illogical. We

declare once again that in return for Azerbaijan's intention to establish peace and security in the region, and for peace-building initiatives, Armenia's continuation of destructive activities contrary to its obligations, not only does not serve the restoration of peace in the region, but is primarily against Armenia. Azerbaijan, for its part, is committed to establishing peace and stability in the region, and will continue its actions in this direction on the basis given to him by international law," Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out in response to Nikol Pashinyan's baseless accusations.

On November 17, President Ilham Aliyev received a delegation, which included officials of the European Union and a number of Eastern Partnership member states, led by Special Envoy of the European Union for the Eastern Partnership Dirk Schuebel. During the meeting, President Ilham Aliyev draw the attention of the European delegation to the unconstructive position of Armenia in the post-war peace process. "Taking into account that you mentioned your visit to Armenia and that you got a message from Armenian leadership about peace, you know, we have heard these messages during all the years of occupation that they want peace. And they were not sincere. We also wanted peace but we also wanted our lands back. They wanted peace not giving the lands back. This is a difference. And we had to resolve the conflict by force and then by political means. Now, when they talk about peace, I think it is a kind of manipulation, because if they really wanted peace they would have responded to our proposal. It was us who made a proposal to start negotiations on peace agreement right after the war ended. And that was one of the probably unique cases in the world history. The country which had been under occupation

for so many years, which restored justice by force, and after the enemy was defeated and thrown out from our territories we offered peace. Despite all the devastations, destructions, Armenians created on our territory, and sufferings of Azerbaijanis, we offered peace. We offered a kind of framework that famous five principles, was us who advocated for establishing a commissions on delimitation, it was us who was trying to find a ground for normalization of relations. Armenia was very reluctant in the first phases of the process. Now, they talk about peace. But what do they mean by peace? We do not actually understand," President Ilham Aliyev pointed out.

"Our position is very clear. It has been articulated many times publicly and also in my contacts with the leaders of European Commission, United States, Russia, the countries which have been involved in the process of normalization that we need to have two tracks- Armenian-Azerbaijani normalization process and also issues related to Armenian minority in Azerbaijan, in Karabakh with respect to their rights and security. Just yesterday, I had a phone call from Secretary of State Blinken and once again we talked about that. We have full understanding that there must be two tracks. And they should not be mixed up. But statements from Armenia are very controversial. They say they recognize our territorial integrity and sovereignty. Not only say but they signed under that in Prague and in Sochi. That means sovereign people of all our territory. We all understand what sovereignty means. At the same time, they want to incorporate issues related to Armenian minority in Azerbaijan into our peace agreement. It will not work. It is not possible. And we will not agree on that. Therefore, we need to have a very clear

position from Armenian government about their agenda,” President Ilham Aliyev added.

“We need to have a very clear position from Armenian government about their agenda. And I told recently, if they want peace we want peace, if they do not want peace, well, it is their choice. We did not have peace for 30 years, what was the end of the story Armenia should not forget. Therefore, again, we need to judge their actions by steps not by words, because their words sometimes contradict what they do or what they plan. I do not know whether you got a direct answer from Armenian leadership about that. I doubt, because they want to keep this ambiguity which is not helpful. And, also the country which wants peace should refrain from very dangerous rhetoric, which Armenian officials afforded recently, comparing Azerbaijan to ISIS and Al-Qaeda, I think is a very dangerous rhetoric. First, because they acted as ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Ambassadors of EU visited the liberated territories, Armenians did the same what was done by ISIS and Al-Qaeda with respect to historical and religious heritage. It was not us, it was them. So they committed acts of terror, they committed genocide, they destroyed our mosques, not us. But Mr. Pashinyan when he uses this wording he should know that we hear it, and what will be our reaction he should also think about,” President Ilham Aliyev emphasized.

“I think important is that Armenia should openly declare what they do want. If they want to talk about rights and security of Armenians in Karabakh, it will not work. We are ready to talk about that with Armenians who live in Karabakh, not with those who have been sent from Moscow hiding in their pockets billions of stolen money from Russian people, like person called Vardanyan who was transferred from Moscow there with a very clear agenda,”

President Ilham Aliyev noted, adding that “But we are ready to talk to those people in Karabakh who live there and who wants to live there. We are ready. By the way, this process has started. If not for external interference and attempts to block this process from some countries, which I just mentioned, I think the process could have had better dynamic. But it has nothing to do with Pashinyan and his government. This must be separated. As I said, there is a consensus between Azerbaijan, EU, United States and Russia. Those countries and the institution, which Azerbaijan sees as those who can be helpful.”

V. France’s biased stance against Azerbaijan undermines the peace process

The resolutions adopted by the French Senate and National Assembly in November calling for sanctions against Azerbaijan and recognizing the separatist entity of “Nagorno-Karabakh” is a one-sided approach to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, which makes France’s participation in the peace process no longer possible. These resolutions ignore international law and principles, as well as internationally-adopted resolutions concerning the conflict, and undermine the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The resolutions call on the Azerbaijani military to leave what it calls “Armenian territory”, despite the fact that no delimitation of the border has occurred due to Armenian occupation of the region for the past 30 years. They also call on the French government to impose sanctions on Azerbaijan. These resolutions do not legally obligate the French government to implement it. However, they do complicate the ongoing peace negotiations between the two countries and make prospects for reconciliation between the two

peoples more difficult. While foreign and security policy in France is under the control of the President, the National Assembly has little power over the President's foreign agenda. However, there seems to be a consensus between the parliament and President Emmanuel Macron on this issue. A month before the resolution was adopted, President Macron made a similarly-worded statement accusing Azerbaijan of launching a "terrible war" in 2020 to retake the Karabakh region, and triggering "offensives" on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in September. While he did not go as far as recognizing the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic", he referred to the region where it is located as "disputed territory", even though he himself admitted two years ago that "Nagorno-Karabakh" is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. These statements by President Macron are seen as unacceptable by Azerbaijan, particularly given the country's previously friendly relations with France under Macron's predecessors. President Ilham Aliyev stated in response to Macron's comments that "the current French leadership has effectively crossed out all this".

The strong Armenian diaspora in France has played a crucial role in shaping the country's policies concerning the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. During the First Karabakh War, France sided with Armenia at UN Security Council discussions about the conflict and sought to absolve Armenia of responsibility for its invasion, despite evidence of ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis. According to recently declassified State Department cables, France's UN Ambassador watered down the language of a UN Security Council resolution proposed by the US and other Council members, minimizing the consequences for Armenia. At France's insistence, the resolution referred to the perpetrators of the invasion as "local

Armenian forces" rather than the state of Armenia, and treated the conflict not as an act of aggression under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, but as a dispute to be settled peacefully under Chapter VI.

Despite taking on a mediating role as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, France has continued to show bias towards Armenia. This was evident in late 2020, when both chambers of the French parliament adopted resolutions calling for the recognition of the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic", even though Armenia itself had not recognized this separatist entity. These resolutions, like the latest Senate resolution, are not legally binding, so the French government has not implemented them in practice.

The latest resolution and statements by the French President come amid growing efforts by Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign a peace treaty that is expected to include mutual recognition of each other's territorial integrity. The sides have already declared their readiness to sign such a deal on multiple occasions, including at the Prague summit in October, where they were joined by EU Council President Charles Michel and President Macron. However, Macron's statements calling "Nagorno-Karabakh" a "disputed territory" raise questions about why he and the French parliament are undermining the peace process.

This destructive approach by the French government emboldens radical nationalist groups in Armenia and encourages them to oppose peace talks with Azerbaijan. In this regard, France's policies resemble those of Russia, which also appears more interested in maintaining the conflict in some form. Both sides bring up issues related to "Nagorno-Karabakh" during peace talks and encourage Armenian radical groups to oppose the

recognition of Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the region.

Any peace treaty that does not address the core issue of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity will fail to end the violence and hostilities between the two countries. By adopting resolutions calling for the recognition of the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" and disputing Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the region, the French parliament is not contributing to peace efforts in the region.

On November 25, President Ilham Aliyev announced that the meeting scheduled for December 7 with the Prime Minister of Armenia through the mediation of the European Union would not take place. President Ilham Aliyev said that Pashinyan demanded the participation of French President Emmanuel Macron at the meeting which made the meeting non-viable. "The next meeting in Brussels was supposed to be held on 7 December. Because at the last meeting we agreed to meet in November but then we had a meeting in Sochi organized by President Putin at the end of October. So it was supposed to be held on 7 December, but yesterday I got information from Hikmat Hajiyev that he was communicated from the office of Charles Michel and informed that Prime Minister Pashinyan agrees to the meeting on one condition – that President Macron also should participate. Of course, that means that this meeting will not take place because of what happened after Prague. The Prague meeting was on 6 October, and then less than one week later President Macron in his interview attacked Azerbaijan and accused us of what we hadn't done. After that there was this famous French Senate resolution, which was absolutely unacceptable and insulting. Now there will be another resolution of the National Assembly of France of the same

anti-Azerbaijani origin. And then there was an attempt by France to attack us through the Francophonie summit, which is absolutely unacceptable because Francophonie is a humanitarian organization. It never dealt with issues like that. We have the initial text, a draft text of the France-Armenia tandem, which is full of insinuation, accusations and insults. But we have friends not only in the Non-Aligned Movement. Some of them, by the way, are members of Francophonie and also in Europe. So this anti-Azerbaijani resolution was actually canceled or they adopted something very formal," President Ilham Aliyev stated.

"It is clear that under these circumstances and with this attitude France cannot be a part of peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia. And it wasn't us who cut them from this format. It was them, because neither Russia nor the United States, other former Minsk Group co-chairs, never took, officially I mean, sides in the post-war period – only France," President Ilham Aliyev noted, adding that "I also consider this decision of the Armenian Prime Minister – because they could have imagined that we will be against it – as an attempt to undermine the peace process. Because the peace process will lead to the signing of the peace agreement in which they will have to admit that there is nothing about Karabakh. And in all the press-releases – whether adopted in Sochi or in Brussels – there is no reference to Karabakh. That's why the Armenian side probably decided to use the old tactic which they used during the occupation to make this process endless without any result-oriented scenario. So if it is their choice, what can we do? We cannot force them to sign it. That means that there will be no peace treaty. And if there is no peace, then what do we have?"

VI. Iran escalates tensions with Azerbaijan

“I worked with three previous Iranian presidents – with President Hatami, with President Ahmadinejad and with President Rouhani. And never, during all these years, did we have anything similar to what we have now,” President Ilham Aliyev said in his speech at the international conference under the motto “Along the Middle Corridor: Geopolitics, Security and Economy” held in Baku on November 25. “Never has there been a military training, two trainings within several months, on our border with words full of hatred and threats to Azerbaijan. Never! So it means that it was not us who is the generator of this situation. We want this situation to end sooner than later. We want peace and friendly relations with all our neighbors, but at the same time, we will always defend our dignity, our independence and our lifestyle. We will not allow any foreign player to impose its standards and its will on our government and our people,” President Ilham Aliyev warned.

“During the times of the occupation, the Iranian armed forces never held any military trainings on the border with Azerbaijan, which was occupied. They could have done that. A 132-kilometer section of the Azerbaijani border was under occupation. And this is a border between Azerbaijan and Iran. Why didn't they hold military trainings on that border? Iranian officials, including very high-ranking personalities, said that Armenian territorial integrity is a red line for Iran. Why none of them said the same about us? For 30 years our territory was under occupation. Did anyone hear from Iranian officials that Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is a red line? No. These are the questions the Azerbaijani people are asking. It is not only me who asks these questions. Every Azerbaijani who cares

about his country asks these questions. And we cannot get an answer,” President Ilham Aliyev wondered.

“Everything happening between Iran and Azerbaijan now was not generated by us. We are only responding and we will respond to any kind of anti-Azerbaijani steps whether it is in words or in actions,” President Ilham Aliyev underscored, emphasizing that “we had to organize a military training on the Iranian border in order to demonstrate that we are not afraid of them. And we are telling them that we are not afraid. We will do everything in order to protect our lifestyle, the secular development of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis, including Azerbaijanis in Iran. They are a part of our nation.”

“We have 340 schools in Azerbaijan where lessons are conducted in the Russian language. We have 10 Georgian schools in Azerbaijan. In Georgia, there are 116 Azerbaijani schools although there is something like 200,000-300,000 Azerbaijanis in Georgia. There are Armenian schools in Iran. But there are no Azerbaijani schools in Iran. How can that happen? And if someone says that this is interference in internal affairs, we absolutely reject that. This is not an interference in internal affairs. Azerbaijan's foreign policy is very clear – we never interfere in the internal affairs of any country. But this is a part of society which has the same ethnic origin, speaks the same language and has the same values with us. How can we be indifferent to that? Why can't they learn their language at school. They are losing the language, you know. The problem is that. Why we are raising it is that the Azerbaijani language which is spoken in Iran is losing its literary component. It has become a language people speak at home. This issue must be addressed. And I am

raising this issue also because this is a concern for us," President Ilham Aliyev said.

"I hope that the pro-Armenian actions of the Iranian government will not damage the very fragile peace, and I think, there will be more understanding of the necessity to take into account the feelings of the Azerbaijanis and our interests," President Ilham Aliyev said, adding that "the recent steps and actions undertaken by some Iranian officials are absolutely counterproductive. We cannot understand the origin of this dissatisfaction. On the one hand, everybody must be satisfied that the long-lasting stand-off between Azerbaijan and Armenia has come to an end. This means that there will be regional stability and potentially cooperation. To be unhappy about that – we do not understand what geopolitical reasons for that are."

In early November, State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan arrested 19 citizens that were members of illegal armed group controlled by the Iranian special services. The group was sent by Iran to Syria for training and had plans to act against Azerbaijan's national interests. "Special services of Iran actively carry out intelligence-disruptive activities against Azerbaijan," first deputy head of the State Security Service, Lieutenant-General Jeyhun Shadlinski warned at the conference on "Experiences of the Patriotic War" organized by the Service of the Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan on November 24.

There is no doubt that the outcome of the 44-Day War caught Iran by surprise. In the last two years, Tehran has been very reluctant to accept the new postwar reality of the region. While Russia has been the dominant power broker in the region for much of the post-Soviet period, Turkey, Iran's regional rival, has become increasingly active in different

spheres in the region in recent years. The Russian invasion of Ukraine as further complicated the situation for Iran, as the European Union and the United States have increased their influence in the South Caucasus by playing a larger mediating role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process. For Iran, the presence of external players in the region is unacceptable and it is determined to use military and other means to fill the power vacuum that has emerged in the region as Russia's influence has declined. In this effort, Iran has the support of Armenia, whose leaders seek to use their relationship with Iran against their common enemies, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The growing ties between Armenia and Iran have provided Tehran with an opportunity to become more assertive in the South Caucasus and form a de-facto alliance against the two Turkic states. To this end, Armenia and Iran are strengthening their cooperation in various areas, including the military and economy. In addition to plans to increase bilateral trade from \$700 million to \$3 billion, Iran is also discussing the potential supply of combat drones to Armenia.

In parallel, Iran is exerting military pressure on Azerbaijan to consider its regional interests and concerns. The large-scale military exercises launched by Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on October 17 along the country's border with Azerbaijan were the most visible manifestation of this pressure. The exercises involved the deployment of pontoon temporary bridges to train forces and military vehicles to navigate through water obstacles, which sent a worrying message to Baku, as the natural border between Iran and Azerbaijan is the Aras River in many sections. Iranian officials signaled that the military exercises were meant to warn against the Zangazur corridor project, which is promoted by Azerbaijan to connect with its Nakhchivan

exclave via southern Armenian territories. For Iran, this corridor is designed to cut it off from Armenia and establish a "geopolitical corridor" of the Turkic world by connecting Turkey directly to Azerbaijan and Central Asia. However, since the Zangazur corridor is planned to be under the control of the Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of Russia, and Moscow has ruled out any extraterritoriality along this corridor, Iran's statements linking its military pressure with the Zangazur corridor are not credible.

As Dr Javid Valiyev put it, "there is still a chance of establishing normal relations between the two countries. This crisis actually creates opportunities for both sides to eliminate paradoxes and choose cooperation. If the Iranian government wants to normalize relations, it should not allow anti-Azerbaijani groups to increase their influence on Iran's regional policy and should remove the said paradoxes from its discourse."

VII. Azerbaijan moves to open embassy in Israel

On November 18, the parliament of Azerbaijan, known as Milli Mejlis, approved a bill to open an embassy in Tel Aviv, the capital of Israel. Israel's outgoing prime minister, Yair Lapid, welcomed the decision, stating that it "reflects the depth of relations between the two countries". He called the new embassy "the fruit of the Israeli government's efforts to build strong political bridges with the Muslim world". Israel had previously urged Azerbaijan to open an embassy in its capital. In April of this year, Israeli President Isaac Herzog made such a call in a letter congratulating President Ilham Aliyev on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Herzog also invited

President Ilham Aliyev to visit Israel in 2023 to "jointly inaugurate your embassy". In July 2021, Azerbaijan took another step toward opening an embassy in Tel Aviv by announcing the opening of Trade and Tourism Representative Offices in Israel, where Azerbaijani representatives would hold diplomatic passports.

Since gaining independence from the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has shown a strong interest in developing relations with Israel in various fields. The existence of a substantial Jewish minority in Azerbaijan has been a motivating factor in strengthening bilateral relations between Baku and Tel Aviv. Azerbaijan's national airline company, AZAL, has operated direct flights between the two cities since 1993. Baku has also provided around 40% of Israel's oil imports, which constitutes about 10% of Azerbaijan's total oil exports. The two sides also have a close defense relationship, with Israel reportedly providing 69% of Azerbaijan's arms imports from 2016 to 2020, which amounted to 17% of Israeli arms exports during those years. Despite some reluctance on the issue of opening an embassy in Tel Aviv, Azerbaijan's decision to do so is seen as a continuation of the strong relations between the two countries.

The 44-Day War strengthened the relationship between Azerbaijan and Israel and opened new opportunities for their bilateral ties. Israeli military technology, particularly combat drones, played a crucial role in Azerbaijan's victory in the war with Armenia. It has been reported that Israel rejected a request from a US official during the war to "put the brakes on the re-supply of the Azerbaijani military", with Tel Aviv responding that "allies do not abandon allies in the middle of a war". Israel was also one of the few countries to provide humanitarian aid, including medical supplies,

to Azerbaijan during the conflict. In contrast, Tel Aviv's offer of humanitarian aid was rejected by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who criticized Israel's refusal to stop supplying military equipment to Azerbaijan.

After the war, the possibility of Azerbaijan opening an embassy in Israel increased due to the improving relations between Israel and other Muslim countries in the region, including Turkey. Azerbaijan is thought to have played a key role in mediating between Tel Aviv and Ankara, and in April 2021, Baku called for the creation of a trilateral cooperation platform with Azerbaijan, Israel, and Turkey. On the same day as the decree on opening the embassy in Israel, the parliament of Azerbaijan approved another bill "On the Establishment of the Representation Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the State of Palestine (Ramallah)" in a move to strike a balance and to maintain friendly relations with the other regional Muslim countries.

The decision by Azerbaijan to open an embassy in Israel will make it the first Shia-majority country with a diplomatic presence in the country, which is likely to be met with

dissatisfaction from Iran. Iran, which is home to millions of ethnic Azerbaijanis, has previously criticized Azerbaijan's close ties with Israel and has threatened Baku with retaliation for maintaining these relations. However, the government of Azerbaijan managed to maintain a relatively good relationship with Iran until the 44-Day War. However, Tehran viewed the outcome of the war, particularly the plans to open the Zangazur Corridor, as a threat to its regional interests. This led to an increase in aggressive rhetoric and hostility from Iran towards Azerbaijan, resulting in a significant deterioration in bilateral relations between the two countries.

As Azerbaijan has grown more confident in its foreign policy, it has increasingly relied on its strategic alliance with Israel and NATO member Turkey. In response to Iran's recent military exercises along its border with Azerbaijan, Baku decided to hold its own military drills in its southern region. With tensions rising between Iran and Azerbaijan, as well as between Tehran and Tel Aviv, the importance of Israeli-Azerbaijani relations is increasing for both sides.