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**Human Rights Council**

**Fifty-second session**

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda items 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social
and cultural rights, including the right to development**

**Human rights situations that require the Council’s attention**

**Human rights bodies and mechanisms**

**Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration
and Programme of Action**

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of
the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

 Note verbale dated 12 April 2023 from the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva submits herewith a letter by the Western Azerbaijan Community addressed to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (see annex).

The Permanent Mission kindly requests the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto[[1]](#footnote-2)\* as a document of the Human Rights Council under agenda items 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9.

 Annex to the note verbale dated 12 April 2023 from the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

 Letter from Western Azerbaijan Community addressed to Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO

Excellency,

Being deeply concerned with the destruction of Azerbaijani cultural heritage in Armenia, and echoing previous appeals from the Azerbaijani society to UNESCO, we are writing this letter to kindly ask you to send a fact-finding mission to Armenia to monitor the state of Azerbaijani cultural heritage there.

Our organization, which was established in 1989, deals with the protection of the rights of Azerbaijanis expelled from the territory of nowadays Armenia.

All Azerbaijanis were expelled from Armenia, where they once constituted the absolute majority. Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage, including mosques and graveyards in nowadays Armenia, were destroyed on a large scale.

The Government of Armenia destroyed and damaged Azerbaijani tangible and intangible cultural heritage therein by direct actions and conducting propaganda designed to promote or incite ethnic discrimination directed against Azerbaijanis. The destruction took place before, during and in the aftermath of the military aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan. Most of the Azerbaijani cultural heritage in Armenia was destroyed in a pre-planned manner outside military hostilities. In other words, the driving force for the destruction of Azerbaijani cultural heritage has been the systematic policy of racial discrimination by the Government of Armenia aimed at creating a mono-ethnic and mono-cultural space, a notorious objective that has unfortunately become the reality in this country.

Armenia’s wrongdoing against Azerbaijani heritage also includes misappropriation and alteration of the pieces of heritage. The only surviving mosque in Armenia, the Blue Mosque in capital Iravan, is misrepresented as ‘a Persian mosque’, in a fallacious and offensive manner. In fact, the mosque was built and for centuries had been attended by Azerbaijanis, who used to constitute the absolute majority in the city.

Armenia continues to obliterate the last remaining traces of Azerbaijani culture. The Tapabashi quarter of Irevan city is the only piece of the historical old town of Irevan that has survived to this day. This quarter keeps in its memory the historical code of Irevan from the 17th century to the present day. The Tapabashi neighborhood, historically inhabited by Azerbaijanis, is now under threat of total annihilation. Armenian authorities are about to completely demolish the quarter.

Armenia’s discrimination and ethnic cleansing have made a devastating impact on Azerbaijani intangible heritage as well. For example, the Goycha Ashiq school, the backbone of the Art of Azerbaijani Ashiq, itself inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, took irreplaceable loss due to Armenia’s ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis of the Goycha district, in nowadays Armenia. The Government of Armenia even demonstratively destroyed the monument and the grave of Ashiq Alasgar, a prominent representative of the Art of Azerbaijani Ashiq, in his native Goycha.

The destruction of and damage to Azerbaijani cultural heritage by Armenia has made a detrimental impact on the enjoyment of our cultural rights, in particular, the right of everyone to access and enjoy cultural heritage. The violation of this right threatens stability, social cohesion and cultural identity, and constitutes an aggravating factor in regional security and a major obstacle to dialogue, peace and reconciliation.

We champion the peaceful return of the expelled Azerbaijanis from Armenia in safety and dignity, and after the return ensuring the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law. This requires *inter alia* making Armenia fulfill its obligations under international law to restore, protect and preserve Azerbaijani cultural heritage and property in Armenia.

Protection of cultural heritage is not only a requirement of international humanitarian law but also a fundamental human right as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Enjoying cultural heritage is central to the concept of dignified return of expelled people. Ensuring cultural rights, i.e. human creativity in all its diversity and the conditions for it to be exercised, developed, made accessible, preserved and protected, is part of our fundamental rights, which Armenia has the obligation to ensure prior to, during and after our return to our homes.

Therefore, we seek the support of UNESCO in restoring and preserving our cultural heritage. Sending a fact-finding mission to Armenia to assess the state of Azerbaijani cultural heritage in this country, as well as the level of compliance of Armenia with its international obligations relating to the protection of cultural heritage and cultural rights, would be an invaluable contribution to reversing the damage to the cultural heritage of mankind, ensuring the respect for human rights, and thereby attaining the lasting peace.

Our organization stands ready to collaborate with UNESCO in carrying out activities aimed at assessing, restoring, preserving and protecting Azerbaijani cultural heritage in Armenia, and ensuring the cultural rights of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia to access and enjoy their cultural heritage.

We send a copy of this letter to the President of the UN Human Rights Council, and the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights.

Baku, 27 March 2023

*(Signed)* Dr. Aziz Alakbarov

Chairman of the Board of the Community,

Doctor of Science in Philology

*(Signed)* Professor Ahliman Amiraslanov

Chairman of the Elderly Council,

Full member of the Azerbaijan, National Academy of Sciences

*(Signed)* Professor Kamran Imanov,

Deputy Chairman of the Supervisory Board

*(Signed)* Professor Nizami Jafarov

Deputy Chairman of the Council of Intellectuals,

Full member of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences

*(Signed)* Vahid Aziz

Member of the Supervisory Board, People’s Poet of Azerbaijan

*(Signed)* Mubariz Taghiyev

Member of the Supervisory Board, People’s Artist of Azerbaijan

*(Signed)* Professor Misir Mardanov

Chairman of the Supervisory Board

Corresponding member of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences

*(Signed)* Professor Vahid Novruzov

Chairman of the Control-Audit Council

*(Signed)* Professor Gulchohra Mammadova

Member of the Supervisory Board,Rector of the Azerbaijan University of

Architecture and Construction

*(Signed)* Malahat Ibrahimgizi

Chairwoman of the Women’s Council

*(Signed)* Movlud Suleymanli,

Member of the Supervisory Board, People’s Writer of Azerbaijan

*(Signed)* Rza Avshar

Member of the Community, Honored painter of Azerbaijan

1. \* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)