



**Statement by the Delegation of Azerbaijan
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 4: Freedom of Assembly
and Association
Warsaw, 21 September 2016
As delivered by Fidan Mahmudova
Embassy of Azerbaijan to Poland**

Right of reply

We wish to exercise our right of reply in connection with the statements made by the representatives of the Human Rights without Frontiers and European Association of Jehovah's Christian Witnesses.

The armed criminal group led by Taleh Bagirov operating under the guise of religion was planning to violate social and political stability in the country, as well as commit terrorist acts, which certainly necessitated carrying out urgent measures. This criminal group formed a movement named "Islamic Unity" for the purpose of forcible change of the constitutional form of the government and creation of a religious state governed by the shariah law. The criminal group possessed firearms, ammunition and explosive devices. In addition, the group held illegal gatherings in Nardaran settlement of Baku to persuade people to join the extremist group. For this purpose, they instructed the group members and distributed leaflets with appeals among the population. Specific tasks of each member of the armed criminal group including the persons charged with the commitment of acts of terrorism to be conducted against the public authorities were determined. Taking into account the abovementioned, a special operation was conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs during which the group members resisted the arrest having opened fire on police officers and thrown a grenade. In response for continuous fire from the attacking criminals the special task force used duty weapons. As a result of exchange of fire four members of the criminal group were eliminated and several were wounded. In spite of the increased number of the armed criminal group supporters in the above mentioned territory, police officers courageously fulfilled their duties. Two police officers fell heroically during the operation. Regarding the request to provide the names of the killed police officers – they were Vugar Nasibov and Ismayil Taghiyev. The investigation on the case is currently underway.

With regards to the Jehovah Witnesses religious Community – the Community was registered in 2009 in Azerbaijan, but according to the amendments made to the Law on Religious Freedom, all religious communities are requested to re-register. However, the Community still holds its legal status unless it is re-registered. The only reason the re-registration has not been carried out yet is because they have submitted incomplete documents to the State Committee on Religious Associations of Azerbaijan. In addition, there are no limitations on the Jehovah Witnesses activities in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, only from April 2015 till September 2016 four hundred thousand Jehovah witnesses religious literature have been registered by the Committee.