

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working session 15: Fundamental freedoms II, including freedom of movement
Remarks by Azerbaijan
Delivered by Mr. Rashad Shirinov
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Madame Moderator,

We would like to draw the attention of this session of HDIM to the illegal visits to the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including the Nagorno Karabakh region.

It has been internationally recognized that the territories of Azerbaijan are under military occupation of Armenia. The resolutions of UN Security Council of 1993 as well as the one by the General Assembly of 2008 reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan and recognized that the Nagorno Karabakh region is a part of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

It is very surprising to see that the Armenian delegate has the cheek to blame Azerbaijan – the victim of aggression for the violation of the freedom of movement, whereas Armenia itself purged not only its own territory, but also the occupied territories of all native Azerbaijanis. Today there is no single Azerbaijani living in Armenia against 250.000 persons who used to live there at the end of 1980s.

Despite ongoing political efforts towards the negotiated settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of the generally accepted norms and principles of international law, the Republic of Armenia spares no effort to propagate the illegal regime established in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan aiming at consolidation of the results of its continuous use of force against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Thus, in its attempts to promote the illegal separatist entity established by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan at the international level, the Republic of Armenia uses each and every possibility to mislead the citizens of the foreign countries, in particular the staff and representatives of international organizations, as well as government officials, parliamentarians and media to visit the occupied Azerbaijani territories without the prior permission of the relevant Azerbaijani authorities.

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has repeatedly stated in this regard that any visits by third-country nationals to the occupied Nagorno Karabakh region and surrounding territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, without authorization of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and their unsanctioned contacts with the separatist regime are unacceptable and unlawful ab initio. The Republic of Azerbaijan considers such visits and contacts by third-country government officials and parliamentarians, as well as by the staff and representatives of international organizations and media as unfriendly act directed

against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan informs once again that the unauthorized illegal visits to the Nagorno Karabakh region and other occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan run contrary to the norms and principles of the international law and national legislation, especially the Law on State Borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In this regard, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has explicitly called the foreign nationals to refrain themselves from travelling to the occupied Azerbaijani territories without permission of the relevant authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, through appropriate channels, declared that foreign nationals who illegally visited the occupied territories will be denied the entry to the Republic of Azerbaijan. This should be seen as a legitimate deterrence measure taken by the Republic of Azerbaijan in response to the violation of its state borders and not as the violation of freedom of movement. Thus, third-country nationals visiting the Nagorno Karabakh region and other occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, without the prior authorization of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, are included in the list of persona non grata and their entry to the Republic of Azerbaijan is denied.

The Republic of Azerbaijan expects that OSCE and its member states will continue advising their staff, personnel and citizens, including government officials and members of parliament, as appropriate, against visiting the Nagorno Karabakh region and other occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as will take additional measures, as may be required, including through issuing special instructions and guidance, to prevent their citizens, including government officials and members of parliament, as well as personnel or staff members from visiting these territories without prior authorization of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Now turning to the representative of US, we would like to note that there are no restrictions imposed on any persons emanating from their activities as human rights activists. Each case mentioned by US delegation is related to the relevant criminal cases. Any outside interference into the purely criminal proceedings has the danger to cast a shadow on the independence of judiciary in Azerbaijan. While not indulging myself into the details concerning the individual cases, I would just suffice to say that we have shared our views with State Department officials on their repeated requests. We would ask US delegation to get in touch with its superiors in Washington in order to be informed about them. Having said that we would be delighted to see the same vigorous reaction by US delegation with regard to the violation of basic human rights of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons forcibly expelled from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan by Armenia.

I thank you for your attention.