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PRESS RELEASE

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**Armenian Military Provocation Results in Two Civilian Deaths
*A 2-Year-Old Child Among Fatalities of Armenia's Latest Blatant and Targeted Violation of the
Ceasefire Regime***

Washington, DC – On July 4, 2017, Armenia's armed forces illegally stationed on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan targeted the Alkhanly village within the Fuzuli district of Azerbaijan with artillery fire. Armenia's military action resulted in two civilian deaths – grandmother Sahiba Guliyeva and her granddaughter, 2-year-old Zahra Guliyeva – and another woman – Guliyeva Sarvinaz – was severely wounded. Several homes and civilian infrastructure were also damaged in the attack.

The incident occurred approximately 4.5 to 5 kilometers behind the Line of Contact between Armenian and Azerbaijani armed forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Armenia claimed that the Alkhanly village was targeted because of the presence of Azerbaijani firing positions, which the Government of Azerbaijan and observers have resolutely refuted.

Elin Suleymanov, the Republic of Azerbaijan's Ambassador to the United States, condemned Armenia's latest violation of the ceasefire regime and the regrettable loss of Azerbaijani lives. The Ambassador reiterated Azerbaijan's rejection of Armenia's false claims.

"Armenia's military action was deliberate and intentional and a violation of the ceasefire regime. The Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan has condemned this violent action and reiterated that there were no military installations nor Azerbaijani firing positions located in the Alkhanly village to warrant such a provocation. This tragic incident shows once again that the status quo of illegal occupation is not sustainable and continues to result in civilian losses. Unfortunately, Armenia continues to reject Azerbaijan's call for substantive peace negotiations," said Ambassador Suleymanov in a statement.

In response to the incursion, the OSCE Minsk Group, co-chaired by the United States, France and the Russian Federation, issued a generic statement on July 5th that called upon Armenia and Azerbaijan to cease military action. Armenian media interpreted this statement as a sign of "indirect encouragement" and justification for Armenia's violent actions.

The July 4th incident is not the first time that Azerbaijan's civilian settlements were deliberately targeted with artillery and other weapons by Armenia. This includes Armenian occupation of

Azerbaijani territories during the 1991-1994 war and the massacre of civilians in Khojaly as well as Armenian forces firing upon civilian settlements during a breakout of hostilities in April 2016.

In addition, Zahra Guliyeva, the 2-year-old who lost her life this week is not the only recent child victim. Other children killed by Armenia's actions include, but are not limited to, 10-year-old Fariz Badalov, 12-year-old Aygun Shahmaliyeva and 16-year-old Turana Hasanova.

Armenia's direct and deliberate attacks against the Azerbaijani civilian population and civilian objects constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

This provocation takes place in the context of a recent visit of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to the region, at which the Co-Chairs and international organizations called for changing the status quo of the occupation through substantive and serious negotiations. Armenia's continued provocations are seen as a reaction to Azerbaijan's efforts to promote regional cooperation and to contribute to Europe's energy security.

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has repeatedly brought the international community's attention to the fact that the primary reason for continued tension and incidents in Nagorno-Karabakh and the lack of a resolution to the conflict are due to the unlawful presence and militant actions of the Armenian armed forces that occupy Azerbaijan's sovereign territory. Azerbaijan remains committed to achieving a peaceful resolution to the conflict and working with international partners, such as the Minsk Group, to move forward in this process.

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