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" 20 " November 20 20

Mr. Daniel H. Weiss  
Mr. Max Hollein,  
Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
1000 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10028

Baku, 20 November 2020

Dear Mr. H. Weiss and dear Mr Hollein,

We are writing to express our concern and disagreement about the one-sided position of your management.

It is not clear why the museum's management cares only about the national heritage of Armenia, which is one side of the conflict. Yet, the conflict has severely damaged Azerbaijan's cultural and natural heritage. But you preferred not to mention it. This is probably due to the fact that you are unaware of the huge losses that have befallen us.

Below we provide facts to fill this gap.

The Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts of the Azerbaijan Republic were occupied by the Armenians in 1992-1993. In the early 1990s, 40 thousand Azerbaijanis lived in Nagorno-Karabakh, representing 25 percent of the population. The Armenians expelled them all, committed ethnic cleansing, and then declared "independence".

The Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict went down in the history of the twentieth century as one of the most tragic conflicts, the consequences of which seriously affected the fate of millions of Azerbaijanis. As a result of the Armenian aggression, more than 1 million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced persons, more than 20 thousand Azerbaijanis were killed in the course of hostilities, more than 50 thousand became disabled.

As a result of the conflict in Karabakh, a total of 900 settlements, 150,000 houses, 7,000 public buildings, 693 schools, 855 kindergartens, 695 medical institutions, 927 libraries, 44 temples, 9 mosques, 473 historical monuments, 22 museums, more than 100,000 museum exhibits, and other infrastructure facilities were destroyed.



In 1993, the UN Security Council adopted Resolutions 822, 853, 874, and 884 demanding immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. However, despite this, the Armenian state continued its aggressive policy against the Republic of Azerbaijan. Today, the whole world recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan.

We have been waiting for the restoration of territorial integrity for 28 years. During this period, Azerbaijan has been seriously committed to the negotiation process. Unfortunately, this did not yield any significant results. In addition, over the past few years, the Armenian leadership has always provoked us with its statements and actions, including military provocations. The last one took place on September 27.

On November 10, 2020, the 44-day Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict came to an end. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and the President of the Russian Federation signed a statement.

It should be noted that the Armenian military units, which occupied 20 percent of the country's territory through military aggression, brutally destroyed our national cultural monuments.

As a result of Armenia's military aggression, the famous Azykh and Taghlar caves, the Garakopek and Uzerliktapa mounds, the first settlements in the occupied territories have been deliberately destroyed for military purposes. Along with mounds in Khojaly, Aghdam, Aghdara, Fuzuli, and Jabrail districts, cemeteries, tombs, tombstones, mosques, temples, and other national monuments in the occupied territories of Shusha, Lachin, Kalbajar, Gubadli, Zangilan, and Fuzuli districts were destroyed. Monuments belonging to Caucasian Albania were subjected to serious changes. Thus, Armenians falsify our history by destroying Albanian crosses and inscriptions. The vandals destroyed Shusha Historical and Architectural Reserve, Kocharli, Mardinli, and Juma mosques, house museums of genius composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli, and Bulbul, the author of professional vocal art, the 18th-century Palace Complex of Khurshidbanu Natavan, and most houses representing the oriental architectural features in a traditional design, ancient cemetery, the tomb of M.P. Vagif, the great Azerbaijani poet, Karabakh khan's vizier, Panah Khan's Palace and Juma mosque in Aghdam, Palaces of Malik Ajdar, Hamza Sultan, and Soltan Ahmad in Lachin, mosques, shrines, and temples, stone statues, ancient tombs, burial mounds, residential buildings, which were historical monuments, as well as illegally transported tangible cultural heritage of Azerbaijan to Armenia.

The invaders are conducting large-scale, non-professional archaeological excavations, destroying burial mounds, and transporting the looted finds to Armenia.

The funds of art galleries in Shusha, Lachin, and Gubadli, consisting of works by prominent Azerbaijani artists and sculptors, were also destroyed.



The arbitrariness of the Armenian aggressors in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the desecration and deliberate destruction of our historical and cultural monuments are open disrespect and disobedience to international law and violation of the 1972 UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the 1992 Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, and the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

Lately, the Armenian armed forces have severely damaged the 13th-century tomb of Sheikh Baba Yagub and the Historical and Ethnographic Museum in Fuzuli, the building of 1881, the 9th-century Imamzade Mosque, and the 19th-century Alexander Nevsky Church in Ganja city.

Every tangible and cultural monument on our territory belongs to Azerbaijan. The illicit trafficking of this property from Azerbaijan contradicts the norms of international law and is a war crime and disrespect for human values. We strongly condemn this. In this regard, relevant appeals have been sent to international organizations, especially UNESCO.

Currently, while Armenians are leaving the liberated territories of Azerbaijan, the fact of illegal transportation of Azerbaijan's tangible cultural heritage by the aggressor state Armenia has been revealed. Azerbaijan's valuable archaeological materials retrieved as a result of illegal excavations are barbarously robbed and transported from the Aghdam Museum, Aghdam district of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Armenia. It has also been confirmed that archaeological materials from the 18th-century Shahbulag fortress near Aghdam were illegally taken to Armenia.

Taking into account all the above facts, we are looking forward to your public apology and rework of your previous one-sided and biased statement. This time try to remain objective and impartial.

Respectfully Yours,

ICOM Azerbaijan National Committee