



Press-release

Strasbourg, 18 January 2008

Eighteen years have elapsed since 20 January was engraved on the memory of the people of Azerbaijan as a date of horrible tragedy and heroism. That date of the year 1990 opened a new page in the history of struggle of the people for independence while speeding up the collapse of "empire of evil"- former Soviet Union and the process of gaining freedom by other nations.

Late at night on January 19, 1990, without declaring the state of emergency in the capital of Azerbaijan about 30000 Soviet troops using heavy armoured military equipment moved to Baky upon the order of the leadership of the Soviet Union. A large-scale military operation, aimed at targeting peaceful population was prepared by the special forces of the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior and State Security Committee of the Soviet Union. The main objective of bringing the troops into Baky and some other cities of the country was imposing the people to silence by means of dispersing peaceful demonstrations commenced as a struggle for independence and against one-sided and biased policy conducted by Soviet leadership on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As a result of the operation against unarmed peaceful population, 134 were killed, more than 600 were wounded in Baky and throughout other regions of Azerbaijan. Moreover, destiny of scores of missing persons still remains unknown. In the aftermath of the events mass arrests were conducted in Baky and other parts of the country.

It is a matter for regret that this event has not yet received a fair and thorough evaluation at the time when the perpetrators have escaped a punishment. It is more than evident that the use of force by the leadership of the former Soviet Union against the peaceful population had constituted a violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms.

20 January 1990 has left deep and indelible trace in the memory of the people of Azerbaijan. The memories of martyrs have always been reminisced by the people of Azerbaijan on this day throughout the years. January events are the testimony of not only condolence and tragedy, but of courage and honour.