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PRESS RELEASE

July 11, 2018 will mark four years since the Azerbaijani civilians Dilgam Asgarov and Shahbaz Guliyev have been taken hostage and Hasan Hasanov was brutally killed while visiting the graves of their relatives in the Kalbajar region of the Republic of Azerbaijan occupied by the Republic of Armenia.

D.Asgarov "received life imprisonment" and Shahbaz Guliyev "was sentenced to 22 years" within the fabricated criminal case by the illegal separatist entity, established by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

As known, Armenia unleashed the war and used force against Azerbaijan, occupied almost one fifth of its territory, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts, carried out ethnic cleansing of the seized areas by expelling hundreds of thousands Azerbaijanis from their homes and committed other atrocious crimes during the conflict. The international community has consistently deplored, in the strongest terms, the use of military force against Azerbaijan and the resulting occupation of its territories, as reflected in United Nations Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), thus rejecting any actions violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and refusing to recognize as legitimate the situation created through such actions.

The illegal separatist entity, which "sentenced" Azerbaijani civilians, is referred to by Armenia as the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic". It is denied any international recognition and essentially under Armenia's direction and control.

The photos of D.Asgarov and S.Guliyev before and after the illegal imprisonment prove that they are subject to inhuman treatment in captivity. Contrary to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which prohibit the taking of hostages and demands human treatment to civilians during the armed conflicts, Armenia continues to ignore calls of Azerbaijan to observe norms and principles of international humanitarian law and release of the civilians.

D.Asgarov and S.Guliyev have been displaced from their native lands since 1993 as a result of aggression by Armenia. More than twenty years of longing for home drove them to this desperate act of visiting their occupied lands and in this regard, their desire to see their homes and the graves of their parents is understandable. Thus, their illegal imprisonment and Armenia's stubborn objection to release them cause suffering to their relatives and rightful indignation of the Azerbaijani population.

Armenia's inhuman and non-constructive position derails the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Keeping D.Askerov and S.Guliyev in captivity is yet another manifestation of Armenia's targeted and well-known policy of ethnic cleansing which is aimed at consolidation of the results of aggression and occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and preventing hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis to exercise their right to return to their homes from which they were forcibly expelled as well as enjoy the right to life, liberty and security.

The Azerbaijani side is against the politicization of this humanitarian case and expects that the international community will not stay indifferent to the fates of D.Asgarov and S.Guliyev who developed numerous health problems in captivity and undertake effective measures to make influence on Armenia to achieve an immediate release of the innocent civilians and help them to rejoin their families.