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Statement of the Congress of European Azerbaijanis on the occasion of the 29th Anniversary of the Tragedy of January 20, 1990

Raising awareness of the international community about the realities of Azerbaijan, including the tragedy of January 20 is one of our main duties.

This date, which has engraved on our memory as a Black January, is a Day of Mourning of the martyrs as well as of the fight for the country's territorial integrity, also of the pride and honour. These bloody events once more proved that our people are able to fight for restoration of their independence.

The aggressive act of January 20 committed 29 years ago is, in fact, a grave crime against humanity. At the night from 19 to 20 January, 1990, the Soviet armed forces as well as armored vehicles entered Baku, Sumgait, also other cities and rayons of the country without a prior notification. The landing troops taking out from the landing ships have also attacked Baku and easily destroyed the barricades of civilians.

Eventually, international legal norms, the relevant provisions of the former USSR as well as the Azerbaijan SSR constitutions were severely violated and our multinational people rose to defend their lands and national identity were subjected to reprisals.

Military forces entered the Baku city killed 147 unarmed civilians mercilessly regardless their nationality, age and sex. 744 innocent persons were injured in the capital city, surrounding settlements, and in districts, the hundreds were disappeared and 841 persons were unlawfully imprisoned. On January 20, 21 people were killed even after declaring a state of emergency. Ambulances and physicians carrying the injured persons were also shot; medical staff became martyr as well.

Immeasurable destructions were happened, hundreds of the unarmed, peaceful people including elderly, women and children were annihilated. In order to hide from the population the official information about entering the city by the armed forces, the energy bloc of the state television was exploded as a result of special operations held by the USSR Committee of State Security. The prohibited weapons and supplies were used during these attacks, people seriously wounded were shot at on the spot, were thrown under caterpillars of the heavy military vehicles and were killed painfully by the brutal soldiers. War criminals full of hatred against the Azerbaijanis destroyed the corps in order to hide their number.

At that period, on behalf of all Azerbaijanis, the sharpest statement was made by the National leader Heydar Aliyev, whereas he demanded to give political assessment to the crimes against humanity committed on January 20 and to punish perpetrators. In 1993, at the initiative of Heydar Aliyev, the country Parliament declared January 20 as a Day of Mourning, which is commemorated in the country each year.

The peaceful people demanding the restoration of their constitutional rights were murdered by the armed forces, but they failed to break the will of the people and this fight for freedom resulted with re-gaining the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991, the 28th anniversary of which is to be marked this year.

As a result of this crime against humanity, the provisions of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international legal documents on human rights were severely violated. Nevertheless, the perpetrators and benefactors of the tragedy of January 20, which was one of the horrible crimes committed in XX century by its nature and scale, have not been punished yet and the crime was not legally assessed at the international level.

There is sufficient legislative framework for the interpretation of the events occurred on January 20, 1990, as a crime against humanity. Furthermore, there are also enough grounds for bringing the military servants committed those violent acts as well as their commanders, the former Soviet Administration to the criminal responsibility, in particular.

The statement is addressed to the European Court of Human Rights, the European Parliament's Human Rights Commission.

Sincerely,

**President of the Congress of European Azerbaijanis
Sahil Gasimov**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sahil Gasimov', with a small 'x' mark below the first part of the signature.