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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

Statement

**in response to the Joint statement marking the International Day in Support of
Victims of Torture
as delivered by the Delegation of Armenia
at the 1431st meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

06 July 2023

I would like to thank the delegation of Switzerland for raising the current issue on "International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, observed on June 26", which is a good reminder of our joint commitment to prevention and eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

It should be noted that while we mark the international Day in Support of Victims of Torture, Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages continue to face existential threats in the prisons of Azerbaijan.

It is almost three years now that in gross violation of International humanitarian law and Geneva Conventions Azerbaijan is concealing the number of Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians, while the fate of hundreds of missing persons and dozen cases of enforced disappearances resulting from the First Nagorno-Karabakh War and the 44-Day War remains unclarified. This is yet another indication of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Azerbaijan continues to disregard the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on the implementation of interim measures to provide information on Armenian hostages in Azerbaijan, as well as provisional measures put forward by the International Court of Justice on December 7, 2021, which ordered Azerbaijan to cease racist and discriminatory policies against Armenians.

Mr. Chair,

Armenian POWs are systematically subjected to humiliation and torture. Azerbaijani guards use different objects such as belts, screwdrivers, metal chains, gun butts to beat the POWs all over their bodies leaving many with permanent injuries. It should be emphasized that in

its treatment of captives, the Azerbaijani side did not distinguish between civilians who had not participated in military activities.

This complex crime violates all range of human rights, including the right to life, the right not to be subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to liberty and security, the right to a fair trial.

Torture and ill treatment has always been a distinctive feature in the Azerbaijani penitentiary system. Therefore, the fate of the Armenian prisoners of war and civilians is particularly worrying.

The lack of cooperative approach of Azerbaijani authorities makes it impossible to accurately estimate the number of missing persons, to acquire reliable information regarding the fate or whereabouts of those disappeared, and whether they are still alive.

There are at least two dozen well-documented cases of enforced disappearances, which are supported by indisputable facts about the capture of Armenian prisoners of war by Azerbaijani forces, yet Azerbaijan has neither confirmed their captivity nor any other status.

Dear colleagues,

It should also be emphasized that the war of aggression unleashed against Nagorno-Karabakh was accompanied by ethnic cleansing and atrocities against the Armenian people of Artsakh. Most of the Armenians who did not manage or were unable to leave the territories that came under the control of Azerbaijan, were brutally killed, many were beheaded alive, their corps were mutilated.

We regret that the ODIHR failed to display public engagement in numerous cases of major human rights violations, ethnic cleansing, extrajudicial killings of Armenian prisoners of war, mutilation of bodies, beheadings, mock trials against Armenian Prisoners of War, torture and ill-treatment. For unknown reasons or considerations, all these cases went unnoticed by the ODIHR.

In closing, we reiterate our call of urgency to stop impunity for the acts of torture and end its use in the OSCE region.

Thank you.