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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

Statement

**On the Situation on the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and
Azerbaijan**

**delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 1098th Meeting of the OSCE
Permanent Council
April 28, 2016**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the recent developments on the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

Despite the calls of international community to adhere to the 1994 ceasefire regime and halt the hostilities and return to the negotiation table, Azerbaijan continued to resort to military actions along the Line of Contact.

The Azerbaijani armed forces conducted heavy shelling of the positions of NK Defense Army and civilian settlements including by using heavy mortars, artillery, multiple rocket launch systems and tanks. After halting major hostilities in the beginning of April 10 casualties of the NK Defense Army have been reported as a result of military actions by Azerbaijani forces. The Mataghis village and the town of Martakert were indiscriminately shelled by tanks and heavy artillery (*see the attached pictures*). The Azerbaijani side enlarged the area of its military actions to include also the Armenian-Azerbaijani state-border. A number of times civilian settlements located at the north-eastern part of the border were targeted.

It is remarkable how Azerbaijani authorities try to justify their action by assuming simultaneously the role of both winner and victim. On one side Azerbaijan claims that they are imposing their will on the ground and on the other hand it blames the Armenian side for escalation.

As it was noted in recent statement of the Nagorno-Karabakh Ministry of Defense “Azerbaijan’s military leadership adopted a tactics which obviously shows that the official Baku, on the one hand, takes provocative actions to deliberately escalate the situation, while on the other hand, rushes to present the developments along the frontline as consequences of offensive actions by the Armenian sides”.

It is particularly disturbing that Azerbaijani armed forces turned civilian settlements into frontline positions from where they shell both military installations and civilian objects in Nagorno-Karabakh (*see the attached pictures of Azerbaijani military positions in the civilian settlements*).

Using civilians as shields violates international humanitarian law, something that Azerbaijan has been constantly doing since its large scale military offensive. I

would like to refer here to the Interim Report of the Nagorno-Karabakh Human Rights Defender which comprehensively documented the grave violations of humanitarian law by Azerbaijani armed forces circulated by my delegation here in the OSCE.

It is deplorable that Azerbaijan simply denies any violation of international humanitarian law and customs of war by its armed forces despite of abundant factual evidence.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Azerbaijani side continued to disrupt activities of the OSCE PRCiO. While the NK authorities immediately responded positively to the proposal of the PRCiO to conduct monitoring on the Line of Contact, the Azerbaijani side so far has failed to give its agreement. Another attempt of the Office to conduct monitoring on the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border was rejected by the Azerbaijani authorities.

Monitoring of the ceasefire regime, established by the trilateral ceasefire agreements in May, 1994 and February, 1995 is the core activity of the PRCiO Office and so far the only practical CSBM. PRCiO Office, being the only international permanent presence in the conflict zone is the eyes and ears of international community, which can deliver objective information on the real state of affairs on the Line of Contact. The obstructive stance by the Azerbaijani side should be a matter of close attention of Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the OSCE Chairmanship.

The recent large-scale military offensive of Azerbaijan revealed that the PRCiO capacities should be significantly expanded both in human and financial terms. The Office needs advanced technical equipment to raise the efficiency of monitoring.

Azerbaijan has been trying to erode the ceasefire regime not only through military actions on the ground. Here in Vienna and in New York Azerbaijan openly communicated its decision to denounce the 1994 ceasefire agreement. In this regard we would like to refer to the statement of the Foreign Ministry of Armenia, which inter alia states: "Armenia strongly condemns this step whereby Azerbaijan grossly breaches May 1994 ceasefire agreement, as well as casts doubt on the July 1994 agreement on the reinforcement of ceasefire and the February 1995 agreement on the consolidation of ceasefire. Notably, the July 1994 agreement requires Azerbaijan to "maintain the ceasefire regime until signing of the big political agreement The 1994 and 1995 trilateral ceasefire agreements have for years served as a basis for preserving the fragile ceasefire. Any harm to these agreements is a serious obstacle for the peace process, hinders the efforts of the Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman in Office and undermines regional security. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia states that, taking into consideration the possible dangerous consequences emanating from this irresponsible step of Azerbaijan, and as a signatory party to 1994 and 1995 existing agreements on the ceasefire and the consolidation of the ceasefire, Armenia will exert every possible

effort and carry out all necessary steps to guarantee the security of Nagorno-Karabakh and its population.

Also, I would like to recall that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nagorno-Karabakh which, as a party to those agreements, in its statement strongly condemned the attempts to reconsider the 1994 ceasefire and 1995 cease fire consolidation agreements as an explicit attempt to unleash another war against people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The co-Chairs of the Minsk Group reiterated their position that the trilateral ceasefire agreements of 1994 and 1995 remain in force.

Mr. Chairperson,

We would like to make it clear: talks on the peaceful settlement of the conflict are impossible and unreasonable in the conditions of restoration of large-scale hostilities and significant human casualties, including civilians. The conflicting party, which is dismantling the ceasefire regime through denunciation of the previous agreements and continuously undermines the OSCE agreed format, as well as mechanisms and tools, currently present in the conflict zone, bears the full responsibility for further escalation and prolongation of the conflict.

Reply to Azerbaijan

Mr. Chairman,

We are ready to restoration of the ceasefire regime under the 1994 trilateral agreement and application of the investigative and verification measures of the ceasefire consolidation as proposed by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, in particular investigative mechanism into ceasefire violations along the Line of Contact. Adherence to the above ceasefire agreements and avoiding of casualties is a crucial prerequisite for productive peace talks.

The claim of the Azerbaijani side that Armenia rejects negotiations is fully groundless and senseless. In his interview to the Bloomberg news agency, President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan stated that it's "unreasonable" for Armenia to resume peace talks with Azerbaijan because "the situation is entirely different now". The President stated that there is no logic in resuming talks while at the same time military would be engaging in war.

We have consistently stated that the Armenian side will never accept the Azerbaijani style of negotiating with guns. To have meaningful negotiations we need first of all to deal with the consequences of the Azerbaijani military adventurism, namely restore and consolidate the ceasefire regime through full respect to the 1994 trilateral ceasefire agreement and the 1995 agreement on the consolidation of the ceasefire regime.

On April 4 at the meeting with the OSCE pS Ambassadors accredited in Yerevan the President of Armenia clearly stated «The Republic of Armenia, as a party to the 1994 Ceasefire Agreement, will continue to fully implement its obligations to ensure the security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh».

Under the circumstances when Azerbaijani troops commit despicable atrocities against peaceful population of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijani authorities even refuse to address flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, Armenia will firmly stand by the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to prevent further identity based crimes.

Thank You.







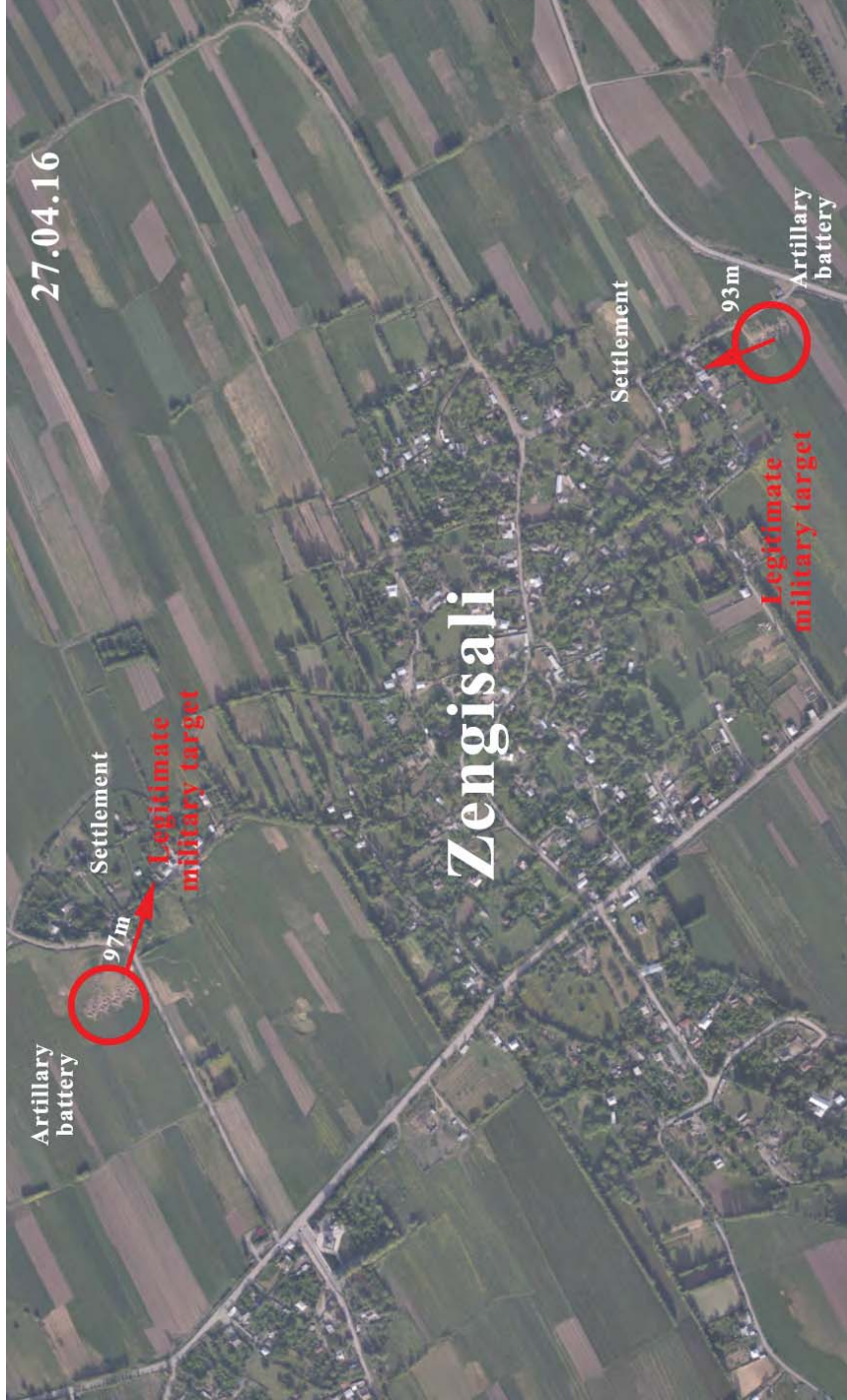




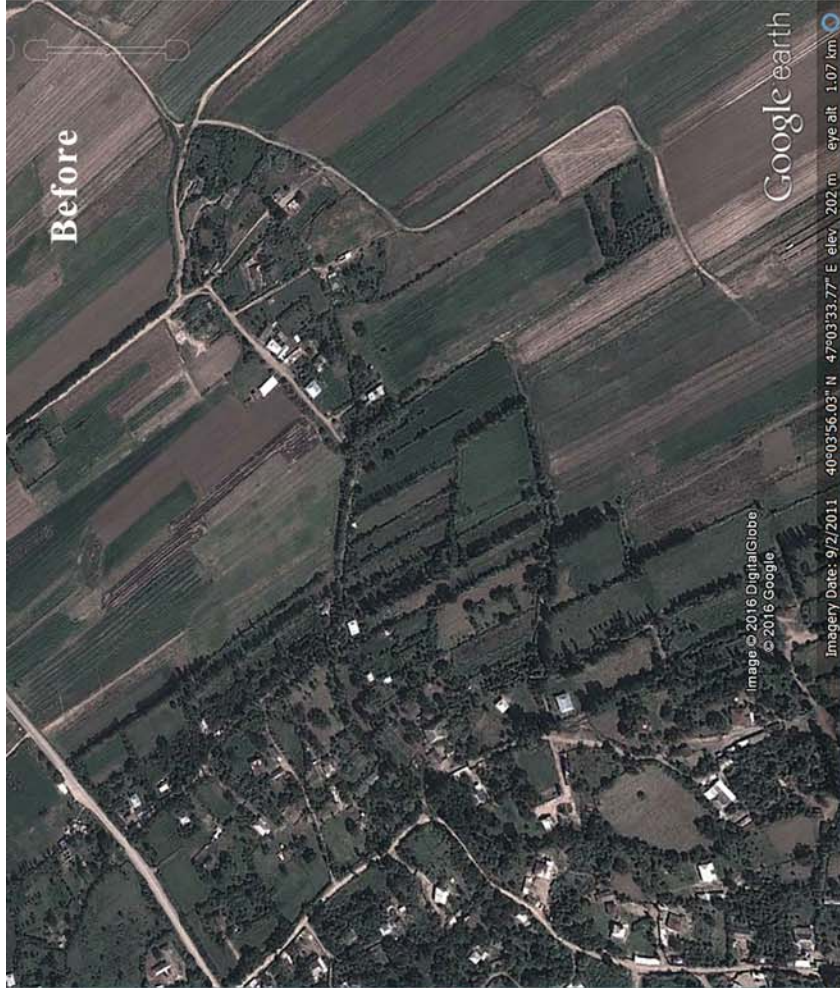












Artillery
battery

Settlement

97m

Legitimate
military target

Zengisali

Military installations of Azerbaijani Armed
Forces located in close vicinity to populated
settlements in violation of Customary

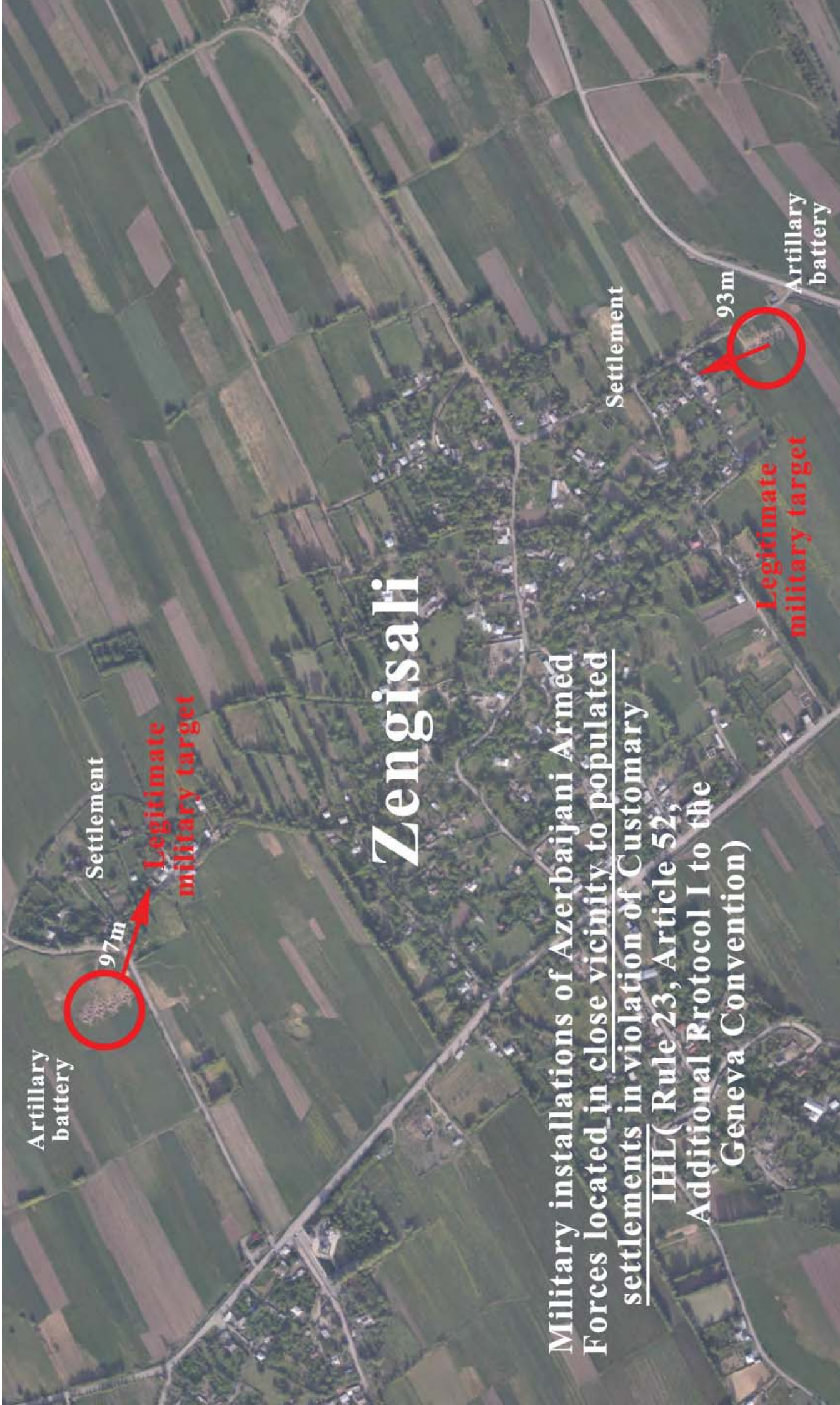
IHL(Rule 23, Article 52,
Additional Protocol I to the
Geneva Convention)

Settlement

93m

Legitimate
military target

Artillery
battery



Artillery battery

75m



Artillery battery

75m



Settlement

Zengisali

Military installations of Azerbaijani Armed Forces located in close vicinity to populated settlements in violation of Customary IHL (Rule 23, Article 52, Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention)