



**Statement**  
**on the Destruction of the Armenian Cultural Heritage**  
**in the Medieval Cemetery of Jugha/Julfa in Nakhichevan**  
**delivered by Ambassador Jivan Tabibian**  
**at the 586<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**  
**December 22, 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

Initially I had intended to simply draw attention to a letter that our Delegation circulated, distributed. It is addressed to various individuals including you, Mr. Chairman, all Heads of Delegations and particularly the CiO's Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions Ms. Anastasia Crickley. The Reference number of this letter is SEC.DEL/286/05 dated 20 December 2005.

It is rather complete enough and with illustrations. That in itself it should not have invited any further comments from us.

However, sometimes timing both in tragedy and in comedy is everything. Lo and behold, just as we distributed this letter we read rather curiously that in our neighboring country, the Spiritual Leader of Azerbaijan Allahşükür Paşazade made a statement, something to the effect that "perhaps, Armenians will become smarter after reading the Holy Book of Islam [the Qur'an] in their native language".

One might think such a statement is about people who have no intention of reading it in their own language the Holy Book of Islam. However, this is on the occasion of the news of the new Armenian translation of the Qur'an. Therefore, I guess Armenia that has traditionally been Christian is not totally deprived as it might appear. Armenia is about to have a new translation of it; the previous one was published in 1912.

However, instead of commending it and welcoming it, it is curious that the Spiritual Leader of Azerbaijan would find it at this moment appropriate to say that after that, as he says, "the Most High will send them [Armenians] a little bit of brains". We quote literally from the report of the Azerbaijani Trend news agency.

We welcome any offer to get brains wherever we can find it.

This also is a matter of timing; it coincides exactly with the day of the distribution of our letter. But it is of concern to us and worthy of our attention that last week the distinguished Delegation of Azerbaijan made a Statement concerning the extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference in its capacity as a forthcoming Chair of the OIC's Conference of Foreign Ministers. In that, our

colleagues reminded us that there is in fact rather objectionable phenomenon of Islamophobia running around. However, it is said that “the Summit reaffirmed that Islam is a religion of moderation, which rejects bigotry, extremism and discrimination”.

Something there is not fitting right. On one hand we are reminded that bigotry, extremism and discrimination are not right, on the other hand at the almost same time a Spiritual Leader, no less, wishes in many ways to denigrate and express deep resentment and contempt for the values and culture of people representing another religion.

Again, bigotry, extremism and discrimination; yet, those who conveyed this message at the same time are engaged in the systematic, comprehensive, sustained destruction of cultural and religious signs in Nakhichevan, where thousands and thousands of symbolic Christian sculpted crosses known as *Khachkars* usually found in cemeteries. Perhaps, it is no more or less, than a clever way of thinking that if all signs of the dead in cemeteries and their ethnic, religious identity were to be completely wiped out then all memory of their having been there alive will also be wiped out. As we know, history plays games and it is not so simple.

With this, Mr. Chairman, I would like to again invite everybody’s attention who is interested in the details to refer to our Delegation’s letter.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

### **Réplique in response to the Statement by Azerbaijan**

Mr. Chairman,

Our reply to the Delegation of Azerbaijan is in my facetious way to which everybody here might have already been used to. Our Delegation simply wants to reassure our Partner for Cooperation, our distinguished Egyptian colleague that Armenia, contrary to the apprehensions of warnings by the distinguished Ambassador of Azerbaijan, has no designs on or claims of ownership of the Pyramids.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.