

DRAFT KHOJALY MASSACRE COMMEMORATION RESOLUTION by USAN

Dear lawmaker,

Each February 26, the Azerbaijani-Americans, the people of Azerbaijan, as well the friends of Azerbaijan around the world, mark the anniversary of one of the most horrific events of the 1990's, the Khojaly Massacre (also spelled Khodjali, Hocali, Hojali).

Exactly twenty two years ago, the Armenian armed forces with the support of the Soviet-Russian 366th motorized rifle regiment, attacked and occupied the besieged Azerbaijani town of Khojaly in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. On the day of the attack, out of 6,000 residents formally registered in the town, only 2,000 people remained. After this war crime and genocidal act by the Armenian military, no Azerbaijanis, Ahiska Turks, Kurds or anyone else remained in the Karabakh region, all were either killed or ethnically cleansed. Khojaly war crime is still the largest crime against humanity in the former USSR in the second part of the 20th century.

Heavy artillery shelling preceded this armed aggression against the unarmed and defenseless town. Many were killed in their houses, few managed to escape. As the survivors of the initial storm operation thought to be lucky to escape the town and walked eastward in search for a safe refuge, Armenian troops ambushed them and opened fire on the columns of refugees, killing 613 civilians, including 106 women, 83 children and 70 elderly. Eight families were annihilated completely; 25 children lost both parents, 130 children lost one of the parents; 487 people were wounded, including 76 children. All this happened just 23 years ago. Many bodies found in the open fields around Khojaly were disfigured and mutilated, making this one of the most inhumane and barbaric events, amounting to the notion of war crime and crime against humanity by definition of the 1949 Geneva Convention.

After a similar but larger scale crime had been committed in Srebrenica in ex-Yugoslavia, many human rights experts called the Massacre of Khojaly an "Azerbaijani Srebrenica".

In 1998, the President of Azerbaijan issued a decree qualifying the deliberate annihilation of the population of Khojaly as an act of genocide. The OIC has recently officially recognized the genocidal massacre of the residents of Khojaly and called upon all the 51 members-states to acknowledge it as an act of genocide. Mexico and Pakistan have officially recognized the Khojaly Massacre as a genocide. Additionally, the U.S. states of Massachusetts, Texas, Maine, Georgia and New Jersey have adopted various resolutions commemorating the Khojaly Massacre in 2010, 2011, and 2012, and more states followed in 2013-2014.

A Khojaly Massacre petition by the U.S. Azeris Network (USAN) on the White House website became the second largest petition at the time, gathering over 125,000 signatures within a month, and thus receiving an official response from the U.S. Government.

On behalf of a group of Azerbaijani-Americans and Turkish-Americans and throughout the nation, on the eve of the 23rd anniversary of this very tragic event, I hereby call upon you to help us commemorating this event with a resolution, citation or a proclamation.

Attached please see the draft resolution, that mirrors similar resolutions adopted in other states.

PLEASE SEND THE COMMEMORATIVE LETTER, CITATION, OR PROCLAMATION DIRECTLY TO THE U.S. AZERIS NETWORK: U.S. Azeris Network, P.O. Box 76044, Washington, D.C. 20013-6044.

Our email: YesWeCan@USAzeris.org

FULL TEXT OF THE PROPOSED DRAFT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, February 26, 2015, marks the 23rd anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre in Azerbaijan, and the observance of this tragic date inspires reflection by individuals across the globe; and

WHEREAS, on February 25 and 26, 1992, Armenian armed forces, supported and accompanied by armored vehicles of the Soviet/Russian 366th motorized rifle regiment, attacked and occupied the besieged town of Khojaly as part of the armed aggression and ethnic cleansing that had been taking place in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan since 1988; and

WHEREAS, when the residents of this town attempted to flee the area, they were ambushed and fired on by the Armenian and Russian troops, resulting in the largest civilian massacre and war crime in all of Europe at the time; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the genocidal act, of the approximately 6,000 population of the town, 613 civilians were killed (including 106 women, 83 children and 70 elderly), 150 "missing" (presumed dead), 487 people were wounded, including 76 children, and 1,270 civilians were taken hostage; and

WHEREAS, the massacre was reported by major U.S. news publications and has been described by the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki organization as "the largest massacre to date in the conflict", as a violation by Armenian forces of customary law regarding the treatment of civilians in war zones, thus amounting to a crime against humanity and a war crime; moreover, numerous governments around the world and U.S. states (New Jersey, Texas, Maine, Massachusetts) have condemned the atrocities; and

WHEREAS, by Presidential decree of March 26, 1998, in Azerbaijan, the annihilation of the residents of Khojaly is recognized as an act of genocide; the Parliamentary Union of the OIC on its 7th meeting by its resolution officially recognized the genocidal massacre of the fleeing residents of Khojaly and called upon all 51 member-states to acknowledge it as an act of genocide; and

WHEREAS, this tragic event, which was later called by experts, and became known as 'Azerbaijani Srebrenica', is a sobering reminder of the terrible carnage that can be inflicted in wartime and the enduring need for greater understanding, communication, and tolerance among people the world over; and

WHEREAS, a number of military personnel who took part in committing this crime continue to hold senior positions in the government of Armenia; and

WHEREAS, in the words of the current President of Armenia and then the Armenian military commander Serzh Sargsyan: "Before Khojali, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]." (Source: Thomas de Waal, "Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace and war", New York & London: New York University Press, 2003, p. 172)

WHEREAS, an Armenian-American author Markar Melkonian writing about his terrorist brother's involvement: "By the morning of February 26, the refugees had made it to the eastern cusp of Mountainous Karabagh and had begun working their way downhill, toward safety in the Azeri city of Agdam, about six miles away. There, in the hillocks and within sight of safety, Mountainous Karabagh soldiers had chased them down... fighters had then unsheathed the knives they had carried on their hips for so long, and began stabbing.." (Source: Markar Melkonian. My Brother's Road: An American's Fateful Journey to Armenia. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005, p. 213)

WHEREAS, the United States Government through the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the US District Court, has deported Armenian soldiers who have been engaged in "massacre of countless villagers" and "crimes against humanity" in Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; and

WHEREAS, a Khojaly Massacre petition by the U.S. Azeris Network (USAN) on the White House website became the second largest petition at the time, gathering over 125,000 signatures within a month, and thus receiving an official response from the U.S. Government; and

WHEREAS, on February 15, 2013, Speaker John Boehner presented a memorial urging that the 21st anniversary of the Khojaly tragedy be commemorated, to the Committee on Foreign Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the UN Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), which call Armenian forces to end the occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan, continue to be unfulfilled; the UN General Assembly, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe and the OSCE by their resolutions, the U.S. Azeris Network, as well as the U.S. State Department and the White House supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including its Nagorno Karabakh region; now,

THEREFORE, we do hereby proclaim February 26, 2015 as the 23rd Anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre Commemoration Day

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Some helpful background materials, memos, quotes and reports:

<http://karabakh.UAzeris.org>

<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewPDF.asp?FileID=12934&Language=EN>

http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2012/Bills/AR/24_11.HTM

<https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/issue-proclamation-commemorating-and-recognizing-war-crime-khojaly-massacre-and-its-victims/W8BbDqYx>

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-2013-02-15/pdf/CREC-2013-02-15-pt1-PgH596-2.pdf>

http://www.diputados.gob.mx/servicios/datorele/LXI_LEG/1_POS_IIIANO/08-dic-11/8e.htm

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/islamabad/02-Feb-2012/mps-committee-slams-occupation-of-azerbaijani-territories>

<http://www.senado.gob.mx/index.php?ver=sp&mn=2&sm=2&id=11745&lg=61>

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Decree_of_President_of_Republic_of_Azerbaijan_about_genocide_of_Azerbaijani_people

<http://www.khazar.org/jas/text/history.html>

<http://www.ilw.com/weekly/editorial/2005,1024-ice.pdf>

http://usdcdata.com/CACD/2/2004/cv00515.Patatanyan_v._Ashcroft_et_al/DS_1_04005151.html

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,975096,00.html>

<http://www.khojaly.org/>

<http://www.khojaly.org.az/>

<http://www.gainesville.com/article/20100203/NEWS/100209793>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/02/23/idUS14041+23-Feb-2008+PRN20080223>

<http://books.google.com/books?id=ywAU3VomIpkC&pg=PA39&dq=khojaly&hl=en&sa=X&ei=FhUqT82vl6rq2AXniMThDg&ved=0CD0Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=khojaly&f=false>

<http://books.google.com/books?id=whVDSkeHI2YC&pg=PA62&dq=khojaly&hl=en&sa=X&ei=FhUqT82vl6rq2AXniMThDg&ved=0CF8Q6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=khojaly&f=false>

http://books.google.com/books?id=BKTRPNR_nlgC&pg=PA166&dq=khojaly&hl=en&sa=X&ei=bRUqT6bPFcPO2wXT_cWODw&ved=0CFYQ6AEwBzGK#v=onepage&q=khojaly&f=false

http://capitolwords.org/date/2008/02/26/E247_honoring-those-killed-in-the-khojaly-massacre/

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,975096,00.html>