



Press Release of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OSCE on 26th anniversary of the Black January

On January 20, the people of Azerbaijan mark the 26th anniversary of a tragedy, which became a turning point in the national struggle for independence, sovereignty and unity.

In an attempt to suppress the will of the Azerbaijani people to regain its independence and sovereignty, the Soviet secret services masterminded clashes among the civilians and used extremist groups to instigate unrest to justify the introduction of state of emergency in Baku and subsequent illegal military intervention.

On the night of 19 and 20 January 1990, civilians, who stood up for national independence and territorial integrity of their country, were brutally massacred by the Soviet army units.

As a result of this terror act, which is referred to as Black January, more than 130 civilians were killed and 700 wounded, hundreds of people were arrested and subjected to various forms of physical pressure by the Soviet military forces with the aim of suppressing the people's desire for independence.

In its report dedicated to the Black January, Human Rights Watch notes: "Indeed, the violence used by the Soviet Army on the night of January 19–20 was so out of proportion to the resistance offered by Azerbaijanis as to constitute an exercise in collective punishment. ...[T]he punishment inflicted on Baku by Soviet soldiers may have been intended as a warning to nationalists, not only in Azerbaijan, but in the other Republics of the Soviet Union."

Though it was a tragic and sad day, the 20th January events is a milestone on the road to Azerbaijan's independence and subsequent development. These events demonstrated the will and courage of the people to build their future in a sovereign State being master of their destiny. The Republic of Azerbaijan, which regained its independence in 1991, reflects this desire of its brave men and women who sacrificed their lives.

Today, on the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the Black January events the Azerbaijani people with deep respect pay tribute to its martyrs and remain united in its path of strengthening the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan and restoring its territorial integrity.