

Statements by the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on the city of Shusha and its history

On November 8th the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev announced the liberation of the city of Shusha, founded in 1756-1757 by the Turkic ruler of the Karabakh Khanate, Panakh Khan. Below we publish a selection of statements by President Aliyev since the beginning of the Second Karabakh War, September 27, 2020, about this historical center of the Azerbaijani people in Karabakh and about its past.

Address to the nation (27.09.20)

“The “inauguration” of the head of the notorious criminal regime of the junta was held recently in the ancient city of Shusha, our ancient Azerbaijan. Is this not a provocation? This is an insult to us”.

“Recently, a decision was made to move the parliament of the self-proclaimed “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” to the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha. This is another provocation”.

“Recently several families of Lebanese Armenians were settled in Nagorno-Karabakh, including in the ancient city of Azerbaijan – Shusha. This is a war crime”.

From a speech at a meeting of the UN Security Council (27.09.20)

“The surrender (*to the Armenians*) of the city of Shusha (in

1992) took place precisely as a result of the struggle for power going on then. The occupation of the Kelbajar region, Lachin is the direct responsibility of the authorities of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan”.

From the interview to TV-channel Russia-1 (29.09.20)

“... The Armenian side publicly demonstratively announces about the resettlement of Armenians from Lebanon to the occupied territories and to our ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha, which is a war crime. This is in violation of the Geneva Convention. This is done demonstratively. Prior to that, they held the so-called “inauguration” of the so-called leader of the criminal Nagorno-Karabakh regime **in the city of Shusha, the ancient pearl of Azerbaijani culture**. All these are deliberate provocations against us, dragging us into conflict and provoking retaliatory actions”.

From the speech at the meeting with wounded servicemen undergoing treatment at Central Military Clinical Hospital of Defense Ministry (30.09.20)

“Karabakh is our native, ancient and historical land. Suffice it to look at the history of the Karabakh khanate to see that the people of Azerbaijan have lived, built and created on these lands for centuries. Our sacred city of Shusha was built by the Azerbaijanis. The lands under occupation today are our historical lands”.

From the interview to the TV-channel Al-Jazeera (02.10.20)

“Another provocation was the organization in the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha “inauguration” of the so-called “leader of Nagorno-Karabakh”. None of the other so-called “leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh” did this. Why did he do it? To offend the Azerbaijanis. Then they decided to transfer the so-called “parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh” from Khankenda to the city of Shusha. Why? To insult Azerbaijanis even more”.

From the address to the nation (04.10.20)

“I wanted this issue to be resolved peacefully. They didn’t listen. We thought that the Azerbaijani people and I, the President of Azerbaijan, would put up with this ?! They believed that our holy city of Shusha would remain under the thumb of the Armenians, and I would put up with that?! Should we negotiate with the Armenian executioners striking a blow at the history of the Azerbaijani people ?! The Azerbaijani people were insulted, the leader of the notorious regime held his “inauguration” in the city of Shusha. Now I’ll see about the inauguration. Wake will be held! Now he ran away and hid like a mouse. Let him come out! The Prime Minister of Armenia starts dancing in the city of Shusha, on Dzhidir Dyuzu, and thinks that we will put up with it ?! Wrong! We will never accept this!”.

From the interview to Trt Haber (05.10.20)

“I remember the time in 1982 when I was in Nagorno-Karabakh in Shusha with my late father. It was the opening of the mausoleum of our great poet Vagif. At the opening ceremony Armenian and Azerbaijani poets recited poems in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages. It was a celebration of friendship”.

From the interview to TV-channel Russia-1 (06.10.20)

“In the late 1980s, when the conflict has begun, 75% of the Nagorno-Karabakh population was Armenian and 25% – Azerbaijani people. The population of **Shusha city**, where they held the so-called “inauguration” of their leader of the criminal regime and insulted the Azerbaijani people, consisted of 98 percent of the Azerbaijani population. **Şuşa city was founded by the Azerbaijani Khan Panakh-Ali. This is an ancient Azerbaijani city, from where all Azerbaijanis were expelled, driven away”.**

From the interview to TV-channel RBK (10.10.20)

“...There was no need to offend the feelings of Azerbaijanis. We

are kind, peace-loving people. But we will not allow our dignity to be trampled and insulted. And when Pashinyan danced in a drunken state on Dzhidir Dyuzu in the city of Shusha, he already signed himself for what happened today”.

From the interview to Haber Global (12.10.20)

“There (*in the basic principles*) it is indicated that at the first stage the Armenian armed forces would be withdrawn from five regions, and at the second stage – from two more regions. After that, naturally, all internally displaced persons would return to the regions where they lived before. This means that our internally displaced persons will return both to the city of Shusha and to Khankendy, and after that a political solution to this issue can be ensured”.

From an interview to the Haber Türk TV channel (13.10.20)

“Our stand is based on historical justice, international law and good practices around the world. That is, at the first stage, the Armenian armed forces have to withdraw from the occupied regions. In principle, this issue has already been decided within the framework of the Minsk Group – (*Armenians have to withdraw from*) five regions, then two regions, after that from Nagorno-Karabakh itself, from the city of Shusha, Khankendy – Azerbaijanis lived there in many villages, – the citizens of Azerbaijan are returning there, and negotiations on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh will continue. But in new conditions, in a new atmosphere. We will get even closer to the peace”

From an interview to the A-Haber TV channel (16.10.20)

“The city of Shusha holds a special place in the soul of the Azerbaijani people. This is our historical city, a cradle of ancient culture. Shusha was the birthplace of many very talented and outstanding Azerbaijani people. Of course, without Shusha, our work (*the counter-offensive operation to liberate the occupied territories*) will be half done ...

Therefore, of course, the liberation of Shusha holds a special place among our goals. We must work hard for this, we must achieve this”.

From an interview to Nikkei newspaper (10.22.20)

“...Before the war, in the early 1990s, more than 40 thousand Azerbaijanis lived in Nagorno-Karabakh, mainly in Shusha, as well as in Khankendy, in the city of Khojaly, which became the place of genocide committed by the Armenians, and in many other cities.”

From an interview to the Le Figaro newspaper (24.10.20)

“The first victims of the war (*in the 1990s*) and clashes were Azerbaijanis living in Nagorno-Karabakh. 40 thousand Azerbaijanis who lived in Nagorno-Karabakh, mainly in Shusha, as well as in the capital – Khankendy, were completely ethnically cleansed”

From an address to the nation (10.26.20)

“... Large-scale military operations began against Azerbaijan, our lands fell under occupation. The loss of the cities of Shusha and Lachin in May of 1992, the occupation of Kelbajar in April 1993 geographically linked Karabakh and Armenia. Although there was no such connection before”.

From an interview to the Rai-1 TV channel (10.26.20)

“...The basic principles envisage the returning to Azerbaijan of seven areas located around the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, and the return of Azerbaijani refugees to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shusha... The occupied territories will be returned to Azerbaijan. Yes, the Azerbaijanis will return to Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha, and then, of course, we will come to an agreement very quickly”.

From an interview to the Interfax agency (28.10.20)

“... Azerbaijanis must return to all the occupied territories where they lived. This has always been my way. To return not only to the seven occupied territories outside of Nagorno-Karabakh, outside the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, but also to those territories, to those lands where Azerbaijanis lived for centuries. First of all, it is Shusha, Khankendy and other lands that have been inhabited by Azerbaijanis for centuries. “

From an address to the nation (08.11.20)

“Dear compatriots, dear brothers and sisters, I proclaim to you with great pride that the city of Shusha has been liberated from occupation! Shusha is ours! Karabakh is ours! In this regard, we congratulate the entire Azerbaijani people, I congratulate all the people of Shusha! Shusha, which was liberated after 28 and a half years of occupation, Shusha is free, we returned to Shusha. We have achieved this historic victory on the military field. 08.11.20 – this date will remain forever in the history of Azerbaijan, this date will live forever, this is the day of our victory”.

“Shusha was under occupation for 28 and a half years. Shusha holds a special place in the history of Azerbaijan. This is our historical, ancient city. For centuries Azerbaijanis have lived, built and created in Shusha. Shusha is not only a pearl of Azerbaijan, but of the entire Caucasus. However, our sworn enemy, who kept Shusha under occupation, caused great damage to our cultural heritage, destroyed our historical monuments, destroyed our mosques, and desecrated them. Now we have returned to Shusha, we will restore all our historical monuments, restore all the mosques, and again, 28 years later, the azan will be heard in Shusha. Several years ago, after the April battles of 2016, when a mosque was built in the liberated village of Jojugmarjanly by my decree. At the opening of this mosque, I said that it is similar to the

mosque in Shusha, it is similar to it in size, and in architectural style, and I said that the day will come and we will restore the mosques destroyed by Armenian vandals in Shusha and that day is coming. Today the flag of Azerbaijan flies in Shusha, today the entire Azerbaijani people welcome these news with pride".

"Today I visited the grave of Heydar Aliyev, bowed before his spirit, and said to myself that I am a happy person, because I fulfilled my father's will and we liberated Shusha! This is a great victory, the spirit of Heydar Aliyev and the martyrs are now calm, rejoice Azerbaijan! Rejoice Azerbaijanis!".

"And this historic day, when I convey these joyful news to the Azerbaijani people, is perhaps one of the happiest days in my life. Dear Shusha, you are free! Dear Shusha, we are back! Dear Shusha, we will raise you from ashes! Shusha is ours! Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!".