………………………………… December 2020

Mr. Ilham Aliyev

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Presidential Palace

Istiqlaliyyat Street 19

1066 Baku

**Azerbaijan**

Dear Mr. President,

As a member/supporter of ACAT-Switzerland, the Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture and the Death Penalty, I am writing to you regarding the situation of

**the Armenian population in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh.**

According to several serious sources of information, grave human rights crimes have been committed in Nagorno-Karabakh during the recent conflict. These reportedly include artillery, aircraft and drone shelling of civilian targets such as houses or blocks of flats and churches in towns and villages. As a consequence, about 90’000 civilians fled the area. Others had to take refuge in basements, public buildings, schools or hospitals. The shelling caused dozens of civilian casualties, among others children, and hundreds of wounded persons, including international journalists.

These attacks were allegedly carried out with last generation lethal means, such as drones “Bayraktar TB2”, “Smerch” rockets and cluster bombs “Mo95 DPICM”. The use of the latter is strictly forbidden by international humanitarian law and also by the Oslo “Convention on Cluster Munitions” (CMM), ratified or signed so far by 123 countries. Although Azerbaijan is not a Party to it, it supported the UN resolution on the “Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions” (adopted on 7 December 2020).

In addition, UN reports also revealed that terrorist jihadist groups who had perpetrated very serious human rights crimes in northern Syria were moved to the Karabakh region. These groups allegedly committed numerous grave crimes against the Armenian – predominantly Christian – population.

Azerbaijan is a Party to the UN Convention against Torture (CAT), the International Covenant on civil and political Rights (ICCPR) as well as the four Geneva Conventions. It is its duty to respect the human rights enshrined in those treaties, also on the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh which recently fell under its control.

I therefore urge you to:

* **make sure that these provisions are imperatively applied in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh in order to protect its population, in particular the Christian Armenian community;**
* **ensure in particular that the Christian Armenian community in Nagorno-Karabakh is guaranteed its rights to freedom of religion and cult;**
* **launch swift and thorough investigations into the serious violations allegedly committed by Azerbaijani troops or its allies in Nagorno-Karabakh during the recent conflict, find and prosecute their authors and accomplices and finally bring them to justice according to international standards.**

I thank you for the attention you will give to this concern.

Yours respectfully,

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**Copy**:

Mrs Hanum Ibrahimova, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Kramburgstrasse 10, 3006 Bern