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Press Release

For immediate release

Escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

On March 7, 2008 the Azerbaijani army concentrated a considerable number of troops and important offensive weaponry along the North Eastern border of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic. These worrisome movements alongside a former frontline took place in the proximity of the village Levonark, where on March 4th the Azerbaijani army launched an offensive against the Armenian positions. This renewed breach of the 1994 ceasefire led to eight casualties on the Azerbaijani side and two injured on the Karabakh-Armenian side.

For months, the Azerbaijani President and the Defense Minister have been threatening Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh with military incursions to take back the territories that were liberated by the Karabagh-Armenian self-defense forces during the period of 1991-1994. According to the respective sources, the war initiated by Azerbaijan in 1991 resulted in the loss of eighteen thousand lives on the Azerbaijani side (mostly soldiers) and twenty thousand lives on the Armenian side (mostly civilians). The March 4, 2008 attacks and the ensuing troop concentration reflected nothing else but Azerbaijan's lack of genuine interest in resolving the conflict by diplomatic means.

The Switzerland Armenia - Association (SAA) calls on the government of the Republic of Armenia to appeal to the Security Council of the United Nations and the OSCE to urge the Azerbaijani government to pull back its troops from the above-mentioned borderline. The SAA strongly believes that the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict needs to be settled through peaceful diplomatic negotiations and political means. Hence, we condemn the recent military attacks as counterproductive and consider them to be an immediate threat to the stability of the South Caucasus region. We emphasize that Azerbaijan's government alone will have to bear the responsibility for the current tensions and for any further escalations of the conflict. In conclusion, we stress the right to self-defense for the people of Nagorno Karabagh.

It is in this regard that the SAA appeals to the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs to react to this crisis and to use its mediation powers for an immediate de-escalation of the conflict.

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