

OPEN LETTER to conductors Vladimir Spivakov and Teodor Currentzis

Dear Colleagues

I have familiarised myself with your appeal to UNESCO and without doubt, support your suggestion on including cultural, art and architectural Christian monuments on the territory of Azerbaijan into the World Heritage List. Indisputably, it is clearly necessary!

Further, you lament that these monuments will have the same tragic fate as the Syrian Palmyra – we recall quite well how this exceptional city was destroyed by thugs from ISIS (an organisation banned in the Russian Federation). And so, showing concern about the cultural monuments in Nagorno Karabakh and by remembering in this context Palmyra, you, either purposefully or unintentionally compare Azerbaijan with one of the worst terrorist organizations rejected by the whole civilised community.

Don't you think that it looks too cynical and too ruthless?

I would like to remind you, my distinguished colleagues, that today's Azerbaijan is a multinational and multi-confessional state, which advocates multiculturalism and that protection of Christian cultural heritage, as well as Muslim and Jewish heritage, is one of the priorities of the secular Azerbaijan's Government. Normal church life of the religious monuments of Karabakh will be preserved: "Precisely in this way will the Azerbaijani side act" – told Ilham Aliyev to the President of Russia Vladimir Putin.

And the words of the President of Azerbaijan are always entirely in character with his actions!

I would like to ask you – Are you aware that seven regions of Azerbaijan, outside Nagorno Karabakh, were occupied by neighbouring country for nearly thirty years? Do you know that in these very regions, in addition to medieval Christian monasteries, there were a great number of mosques and also an Orthodox Church, located in Khojavend?

I would like to offer to your attention a few photographs, where one can see what has been done to the Orthodox Church over the course of these thirty years:



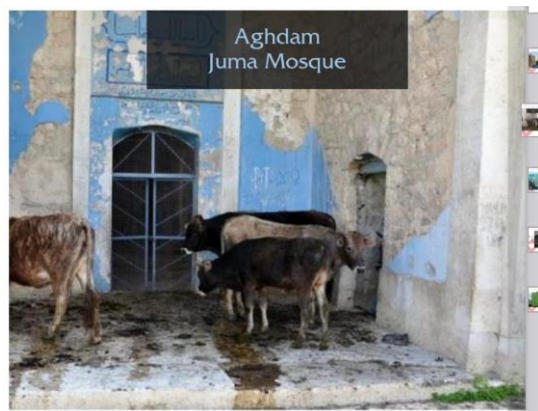


Please pay attention to the name “**GARIK**”, embossed on the wall of the ruined shrine. This name cannot be found among Azerbaijanis, but it is widely used among the population of the neighbouring country.

And these are the photographs of the mosques -



in Zangilan it was turned into a hoggerly



in Aghdam, into a cowshed



As far as the once prosperous and flourishing city of Aghdam is concerned, it became a ghost-town during these years:



Aghdam before Armenian occupation.



Aghdam after Armenian occupation.



The city of Shusha, the gem of Nagorno Karabakh, or as it was called, Caucasus Conservatory, was liberated during the night of the 10th November 2020. And what did the Azerbaijani soldiers see there? **This is the monument to the outstanding Azerbaijani singer Bul-Bul in the courtyard of his ruined museum:**



In only Shusha, more than 200 cultural monuments were demolished, including the palace of Panakh-Ali Khan and the palace library, Khan's palace and caravan-saray, Saatly mosque, Upper and Lower Govkheraga, Vagif's mausoleum, the house of poetess Natavan, with whom Alexandre Dumas-father played chess during his journey to the Caucasus.

Soon a special UNESCO commission will travel to the territories that have been liberated from occupation. Below is a list of the demolished sites, which they will see with their own eyes:

1. 927 libraries with 4 600 000 books;
2. 700 historical and cultural monuments;
3. 808 cultural centres, community centres and clubs;
4. 85 music schools that also studied visual arts;
5. 22 museums and museum branches containing 100 000 artefacts;
6. 4 art galleries, 4 theatres, 2 concert halls;
7. Khudaferin bridges, built in VII-XII centuries;
8. Mausoleum in Khachin-Turbatly village, Aghdam region, XIV century;
9. Azykh cave, Early Man Site, which was rigged with explosives (!!!) by the occupant forces.

You must admit, colleagues, that it is the aggressor country who must and should be compared with the ISIS terrorists but in no way the Azerbaijanis!

No one asks you to apologise for insulting the Azerbaijani people, esteemed Vladimir Teodorovich and not less esteemed Teodor Ioannovich, the words are meaningless in such situation. But maybe, distinguished colleagues, a bright idea will cross your mind now to visit one of fully destroyed cities of Azerbaijan and to give a symphony concert? By doing so you would underline your fairness and impartiality towards the events that take place, music would counter-balance your unjust accusations and your reputation would be fully restored. It is thus how maestro Valeriy Gergiev expressed his attitude towards vandals, savages and destroyers by visiting ruined Palmyra with his orchestra to give a concert. I am confident that this deed towards Azerbaijan and its people would become a confirmation of your civic stance.

Faraj Karayev

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ф.К. (F. Karayev)'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end.

**Professor of Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory,
member of Moscow Union of Composers**