

ASSOCIATION FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT IN AZERBAIJAN

# TWO PHOTO-TALKS ON A TRAGEDY



Dedicated to the memory  
of the victims of Khojali

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# TWO PHOTO-TALKS ON A TRAGEDY

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The Book "Two Photo-Talks on a Tragedy" published by the Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan is devoted to the tragedy committed by the Armenians in Khojali on February 26, 1992.

The Book includes the photos taken by the popular Azerbaijani photographers Ilgar Jafarov and Mirnaib Hasanoglu concerning the tragedy in Khojali and their own impressions on the day.

The main purpose of the Association of Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan (**www.avciya.az**) is to assist the process of formation of civil society through the coordination of the efforts of non-governmental organizations and the representatives of the third sector.

The Association makes efforts to discover the existing problems, to convey them to the public and take complex measures for their solution with the help of NGOs.

The priority directions in the activity of the Association include the protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens; creation of social cooperation for fighting against corruption; support to the socio-political development of regions and local administrations; improvement of the reformatory system; assistance to the solution of the problems of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons; improvement of the quality of the ecological enlightenment.

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## Preface

The book, “Two Photo-Talks on a Tragedy” published by the Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan is devoted to the **Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over the Nagorno Karabagh\* (Mountainous Garabag)**, one of the dramatic events.

On February 26, 1992, the Armenian armed forces perpetrated unimaginable massacre in **Khojali** against the Azerbaijani people with the direct participation of Motor Infantry Regiment № 366 of the former Soviet Union located in Khankendi. The Armenians killed hundreds of people with cruelty in Khojali, including, elderly, women and children. Many people were taken hostages, the town was completely destroyed. When occupying Khojali, the criminals didn't leave a corridor for the civilians to leave the town. As a result 613 people were killed, 487 were wounded, 1275 civilians, including elderly, children and women were taken hostages and subjected to humiliations.

Out of 613 persons 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly were killed in Khojali. Eight families were totally murdered, 24 children lost both parents, and 130 children lost one of the parents in this horrible tragedy.

These numbers hide pain and humiliation, destroyed lives and psychological trauma of the sufferers.

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\* The words in bold type are commented at the end of the book

Horrible photos taken soon after the massacre by the photographers and TV reporters shocked the world. The cadavers of children, women and elderly were humiliated. This massacre shows the real face of “the right to self determination” of the Armenians.

This mass and cruel massacre committed by the Armenians will always remain in the history of mankind with its cruelty beyond imagination and methods of punishment. It was a new stage in the aggressive policy of Armenia against the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

This Book is a photo-talk about this terrible event of two persons far from politics. Those photographers are telling their impressions about the tragedy with the language of photos. Not giving their own appreciations on the tragedy and making any comments on it, they leave the right for the readers to judge them.

Ilgar Jafarov, whose photos were used in This Book, is a photo-reporter of AzerTac news agency. Mirnaib Hasanoglu is an independent photo journalist. The photos of both photographers were exhibited many times in Azerbaijan and abroad in individual exhibitions.

The sequence of the photos taken at the end of February and beginning of March in 1992 in the hospitals of **Agdam** and Baku is very interesting. If the first photo was taken right after the massacre and tells the story about it, the other one tells about the lives of the wounded.

The Book also includes the explanation of toponyms in Azerbaijan and other notions mentioned in the stories of photographers which could be unknown to the readers.

All the photos are Black and White, because the colors of the war are Black and White. The struggle between good and evil, war and peace is black and white, too.

The main goal of the Book is to convey the information about the events of the past and about how the Armenians perpetrated crimes against Azerbaijan, and to prevent future tragedies. With This Book we want to convey to the readers a part of truth about the tragedy in Khojali, which is cruel and painful. We say only a part of it, because it is impossible to feel all the pain unless you undergo through this tragedy yourself.

The truth about the tragedy is always kept in documents. In 2006, the Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan (ACSDA) started gathering materials on the tragedy in Khojali, the testimony of witnesses, facts, news in the world press, and then published them in “The Khojali Genocide (in documents, facts and foreign media)”.

In 2007, ACSDA conducted a wide scale campaign under the slogan “The Khojali Genocide: Million Signatures – One Demand”. As a result of this campaign, the Association was able to have signatures of one million Azerbaijani citizens who demand the recognition of the Khojali tragedy as a genocide. These signatures were published in the form of a book and sent to the parliaments of different countries and to many well-known libraries.

I think that “Two Photo-Talks on a Tragedy” is a kind of continuation of “The Khojali Genocide (in documents, facts and foreign media)” and “The Khojali Genocide: Million Signatures – One Demand”.

There are other photos which reflect the Khojali tragedy. The Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan is planning to introduce the memories of the photographers, who had shot those photos, to the readers in future.

We hope that This Book which we introduce to the readers will help us to convey the truth about the tragedy in Khojali.

**Elkhan Suleymanov**  
President of ACSDA

## This is what Ilgar Jafarov said:

I work in AzerTaj information agency. One of my first service visits was on February 24 to the districts of **Fuzuli**, **Lachin** and **Shusha**. In those days the said districts were under intensive fire, military operations were going on. I stayed a day in Fuzuli, then went to Shusha. I had never been in the **Mountainous Garabag**, and it was my first visit to the region.

When I was in Shusha, I heard from the soldiers that battles were being waged for Khojali and the situation was critical there. Shusha was under fire, too. I was there on February 25. The situation there was very critical. There were great destructions from the shells of cannons. I took the photo of destructions. The next day I did the same.

The fire and shelling ceased for two-three days. Then there was a delegation in Azerbaijan from Iran. Terrible events were taking place in Khojali. It was felt that the Armenians had agreed to cease the fire for making preparations for a more insidious plan. In those days foreign agencies were also making reportages there. On February 26, I returned to Lachin. I shot some episodes there and on February 27, I left for Baku.

The truth about the tragedy in Khojali was broadcast on TV only two-three days later, on February 27, in the evening. From “the

News of the Day” I learned that such a genocide had been committed in Khojali, people had been murdered. I decided myself to go to Agdam and shoot. I knew that on the background of the events my shooting was senseless, nevertheless, I was in debt to do it for history.

The next day I came to my office. If I am not mistaken, it was Sunday. I declared there that I would leave for Agdam the next day. My purpose was to record the events. On February 28, in the evening I left for Agdam on train.

The next day, on March 1, I arrived at Agdam. I went to the office of the district administration in the early morning. I talked to a policeman there who said that **Chingiz Mustafayev** had been there a day before, was shooting in the place where the tragedy had taken place. I thought not to lose time, to see what was around. It was 19.30; I went into the town, walked in one direction. On my way I saw that the shell had destroyed a part of the Central Shop of Agdam at night.

## **This is what Ilgar Jafarov said:**

A little later I was told that a shell had fallen on a living house in the morning. I took my first shot there. One of the people there said that he was a teacher of music, a shell had destroyed his house, too. He showed the house and the shell to me.

Then I came to the mosque. People were waiting and in a low voice telling elegies. They were angry and unaware of the fates of their relatives. If I am not mistaken, one of the men there was the mullah of that mosque.

There were wounded and dead by the mosque. Their relatives were coming, helping as they could.

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## **This is what Ilgar Jafarov said:**

Then I entered a back room behind the mosque, the corpses of the children had been laid on a long table. I had not seen a corpse till then, believe me, and imagine, the copses of the children stood in front of me, my hands did not move to shoot their photo.

Then suddenly I told myself that I had to shoot them, it is necessary to disseminate them in the world, because such a brutality had been committed. I entered the room and took their photo. Just at this moment I saw a man there, I did not know that he was one of the relatives of the children, or of the same village with them. From his face it seemed that he was ashamed, he was blaming himself that he was also guilty in the death of these innocent children. Here is that fragment.



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## **This is what Ilgar Jafarov said:**

The process resembled to a terrible conveyor. The corpses were being washed, put into coffins, the relatives were weeping, then the corpses were being sent to the cemetery, their last residence.

It is again close to the mosque. People from Khojali are waiting, crying. That day I met many such scenes.

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## **This is what Ilgar Jafarov said:**

Near the mosque I saw the corpses of the members of a family, all were murdered. The head of the family was shot from this mouth, mother's face scraped, perhaps she had resisted, she and her child had been murdered. When I was shooting, a relative of the dead came in, he was the woman's brother. He said that his brother-in-law had been a very strong man, nobody could approach him unarmed.

Then by the building of the administration of Agdam I saw other operators, both foreign and local. All were demanding to take them to the venue of the tragedy. There were negotiations with the men from the government, but there was nothing concrete, because it was dangerous to go there. Therefore, I took only those photos which I could.

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## **This is what Ilgar Jafarov said:**

Then I left and came to the railway station. There was a separate carriage for the wounded, examination and surgical operation. It was a kind of field hospital. The wounded, frozen, beaten people were transported there on trucks. An absolute majority of the wounded were unable to work.

Then I saw a servicemen whose state was very critical, he was groaning. The people with him were in the same state. On their faces there were pangs of pain. They were waiting their turn for operation. They were brought on stretchers and put on the floor in the building facing the railway station. Their relatives looked tired and run down.



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## **This is what Ilgar Jafarov said:**

The state of a man pained me particularly, when escaping the Armenians bare-footed he had his feet frozen. His feet were swollen, the skin was stripped. His state was very bad and unenviable.

The wounded and the patients were taken into the carriage one by one, they were examined there. Some of them underwent surgical operation there at once, but those who were completely bad, were prepared for sending to Baku.



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## **This is what Ilgar Jafarov said:**

I saw a family in that carriage. They were living the life of refugees for the second time within a brief period of time. First they ran from Armenia, the second time—from Khojali. The head of the family had been killed in Khojali. The women had remained alone with her three children.

The things which I saw in the mosque of Agdam on that day were really horrible.

On the same day I returned to Baku. Two additional carriages full of the wounded were attached to Agdam-Baku train. In the railway station dozens of ambulances were waiting for the wounded.

The photos taken by me are a small part of those who were wounded or had perished in Khojali. Because there were hundreds of murdered, wounded and taken captives. Among them were children, women and aged people. Their only guilt was that they were Azerbaijanis.



## This is what Mirnaib Hasanoglu said:

When I heard about the tragedy in Khojali, several days had already passed. Then I was in the district of **Goranboy**. Being the zone of military operations, there was no electricity. Radio and television did not work, therefore, I was unaware of it. I came to Agdam where the victims of the tragedy had been taken. Two days had already passed. The majority of the passengers in the bus, which took me to Agdam, were the students of Azerbaijan Institute of Technology. They were going to a place called Uzundere in Agdam to help to unload the arms remained from the Russian army. When we passed Uzundere, they said that the victims of Khojali were being buried at the entrance of the town. Therefore, I got off the bus there.

At the entrance of Agdam there is a mosaic panel. Close to it a cemetery was being laid for the martyrs of Khojali. When I came, there were already dozens of new graves. Many of them had already been filled with ground, but there were still unfilled graves as well. It was clear that they were waiting for the arrival of new corpses. I heard that the soldiers were picking up the corpses in the field and transporting for being buried. When I reached there I saw that the newly transported corpses were being buried. A man was loudly reading the holy Koran; the corpses were being buried one by one. The names of many of them were not known. The names only of those who were known were written on a board and stuck on the graves, the names were written in simple pencils. Some graves had flowers on them, some of them had simple twigs in blossoms stuck on them.

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## **This is what Mirnaib Hasanoglu said:**

The men engaged in the burial seemed to be tired and there was an expression of hopelessness on their faces. They were full of grief, did their job with their heads bent down. They did not pay any heed to me. It was like a conveyor. They were putting the corpses into the graves, filling them, then passing to the next one.

The coffins were made of boards of different nature. It was felt that the number of the dead was so many that nobody paid attention to the coffins. They had used whatever they had. Some coffins were big, others were very small. The small ones were for the children.

It was not a cemetery; it was the entrance of Agdam. It was then called the Cemetery of Khojali, because only the residents of Khojali killed by the Armenians, when fleeing the town, were buried here. The cemetery again remained under the trample of the Armenians after the occupation of Agdam.

I left the cemetery and went to the center of Agdam. To tell the truth, I could not go to the mosque where the victims of the tragedy were being transported.



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## **This is what Mirnaib Hasanoglu said:**

When I came to Baku I went to the hospital and took the photo of a resident of Khojali there. He was not a service man. He was a volunteer defending Khojali. He had wounds on his leg and hip. He had remained in the forest and then managed to escape the siege. His leg was already gangrene and amputated. His mother and wife were at his bedside. Some time later I heard that his other leg had also been amputated.

Then I took the photo of a small boy at the hospital of First Aid. He had been in the Armenian captivity for some days after the capture of Khojali. It seemed that he had become old in those few days in the captivity. He spoke not like a boy of six or seven, but a man of forty who already knew the world. He had been in Khojali for a long time in siege; therefore he knew the names of all arms, distinguished them by their sounds. He was saying that when they were in captivity, they were filled into a stable. Two days later he managed to escape with several captives. Not to be noticed by the Armenians and the soviet soldiers, they walked at night close to the road taking it as an orientation. They hid themselves when they heard automobiles or the voices of men, and finally they reached Agdam. He had bullet wounds on his arm and body.



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## **This is what Mirnaib Hasanoglu said:**

The toes of a small girl were frozen and dark. She was in a grave state of health.

There was also a mother with her child in the hospital. The child was wounded on the arm; her mother had frozen her feet. They had also hidden in the forest. She said that the Armenians were calling them to come up, but those who did it were shot by the Armenians.

Another small girl had also frozen her feet. There were wounds on her arms. She was very beautiful. She had lost all her family members. Then I learned that somebody had adopted her.

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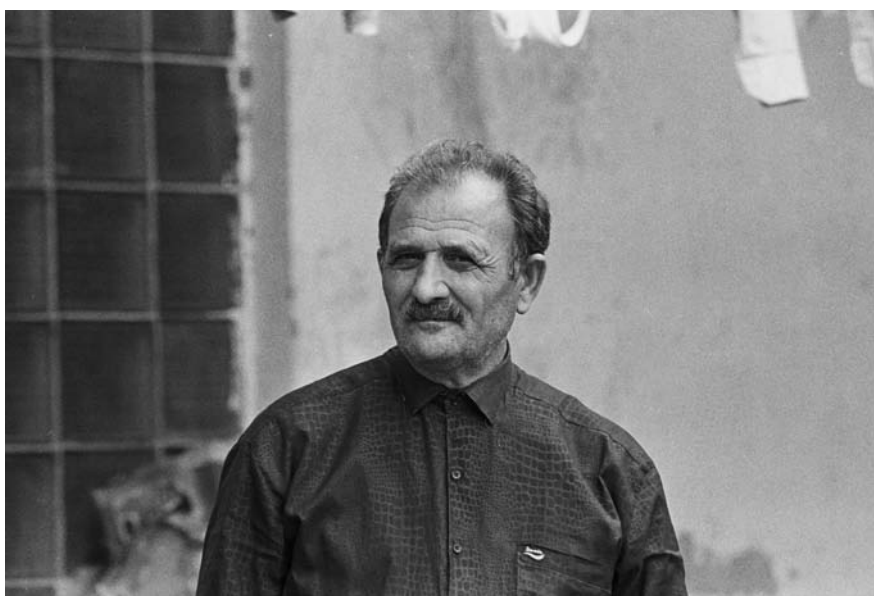
## **This is what Mirnaib Hasanoglu said:**

The Armenians had extinguished the burning cigarettes on the body of a woman; she was also in the hospital. Her body bore holes made by a screw-driver.

And finally, I had a photo taken in 1997 in a hostel resided by the refugees. The man in the photo was from Kojali. His neighbours said that he had lost all his family members in Kojali. He had been in captivity, never uttered a word, lived like an ascetic.

Look at the faces of the children whose photos I have taken in the hospital. The things which terrify the adults, only surprise the children. The faces of these children have been darkened by the war. They have grown before their time, faced problems not referring to them, the eyes of these children are full of grief and sorrow. Because, they have not lived their life of children.

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## Notes

**Ağdam** an administrative district of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Its territory is 1150 skm, population – 167300.

There was a tool-producing, an aerocosmic and communication appliances, a metalware fittings, tractor and automobile repair plants, cannery, a plant of building materials, meat-processing factories, two railway stations, an airport, a plant of mechanization and electrification of agriculture, a unique bread museum, a music school named after U.Hajibeyov and a National Drama Theatre named after A. Haqverdiyev.

As a result of the Armenian occupation along with Agdam, center of the district, 90 villages, ten collective farms, over 100 cultural and educational institutions, in the same number medical institutions remained under the occupation of the enemy.

The district was occupied by the Armenians on July 23, 1993, 6000 of its residents were killed.

**Susha** an administrative district of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Its territory is 29 skm, population – 26700. Its center is the town of Shusha. It was founded in the fifties of XVIII century by Panahali khan, khan of Garabag. First it was called Shusha, then along with it, it was called Panahabad in honour of its founder. Shusha is the home of many prominent men-of-art and culture of Azerbaijan.

On May 8, 1992, it was occupied by the armed forces of Armenia.

When Shusha was occupied, 200 of its residents were killed, 150 became disabled. Two hundred historical monuments, two sanatoriums, house museums of prominent men-of-art, a center for 70 tourists and a boarding school for 1200 pupils were destroyed.

**Lachin**

an administrative district of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Its territory is 1835 skm, population – 68500.

Before the occupation there was a bus-station, 125 villages and settlements, 149 schools, two pre-school and five out-of-school educational institutions, one technical vocational school, 85 clubs, 119 libraries, five musical schools, 142 medical institutions, three tele-stations and transmitters, and others in Lachin.

The district was occupied by the Armenian armed forces on May 18, 1992.

When it was occupied 264 residents were killed, 65 residents were taken hostages, 103 residents became disabled.

**Fuzuli**

an administrative district of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Its territory is 1390 skm, population – 147100.

Before the occupation there were 80 schools, 70 libraries, 20 houses of culture, 45 clubs, folk and national drama theatres, 13 hospitals for 685 patients, 40 first-aid and maternity-aid centers, a TB, and a dermatological and venerological dispensaries, 20 film-demonstrating facilities, a technical



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school, a technical school, two technical vocational schools, 37 pre-school institutions, two museums, a stadium, 65 collective and state farms, 12 farms and others in Fuzuli.

The cave of Azykh, one of the most ancient habitations of man, is in the territory of Fuzuli.

On August 23, 1993, the district of Fuzuli was occupied by the armed forces of Armenia.

Over 1100 residents of Fuzuli were killed or are missing, 113 residents were taken hostages and 1450 residents were wounded.

### **Chingiz Fuad oğlu Mustafayev**

was born on August 29, 1960, in the family of a serviceman.

He graduated from Azerbaijan Medical Institute in 1983.

Since 1991 he began to work as a reporter in the National Television of Azerbaijan. His reportages found access to the leading tele-agencies and televisions of America and Europe, telling them the truth about Azerbaijan which was in the information blockade.

Chingiz Mustafayev created the real annals of the Azerbaijani-Armenian war of the period till 1992. He was known to every Azerbaijani TV spectator with his reports, but the world recognized him with his film about the genocide in Khojali. Just with this very film he conveyed to the world the essence of what had happened in Khojali.

On June 15, 1992, Chingiz Mustafayev was killed near the village of Nakhchivanik of Agdam when he was making his reportage.

In 1993, Chingiz Mustafayev was made National Hero of Azerbaijan posthumously.

### **The Armenian-Azerbaijani, Mountainous Garabag conflict**

a military-political conflict broken out as a result of the territorial claims to the Mountainous Garabag province of Azerbaijan on the part Armenia and local Armenians with the help the Armenian Diaspora abroad. On February 20, 1988, the session of the Soviet of the Mountains Garabag Province appealed to the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan to consider the status of the Province.

On December 1, 1989, the parliament of Armenia adopted an anti-constitutional resolution on the merge of the Mountains Garabag Province with Armenia. It was a clear legal intrusion against the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan on the part of Armenia. On November 26, 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan cancelled the status of autonomy of the Mountains Garabag Province.

At the end of 1991 after the collapse of the USSR Armenia began an open and unjust war against Azerbaijan. The armed formations of Armenia violated the borders of Azerbaijan and entered the Mountains Garabag, joined the Armenian separatists of the Mountainous Garabag and

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began to occupy the territories of Azerbaijan. They first began to occupy the territories of the Mountainous Garabag populated by the Azerbaijanis.

On February 26, 1992, at night, the most tragical event in the modern history of Azerbaijan took place in Khojali. The armed Armenian formations committed a terrible genocide against the residents of Khojali. In the May of 1992 the Armenians captured Shusha. In this war the Armenians occupied all the territories of the Mountainous Garabag. The next step was the occupation of Lachin which connected the Mountainous Garbag with Armenia. In the April of 1993 they occupied Kelbejer, in the July-October of the same year Agdam, Fuzuli, Gubadli and Zangilan were occupied.

In 1988-1993 as a result of the aggression of Armenia 20.000 Azerbaijanis were killed, 100.000 - were wounded, 50.000 persons got different damages and became disabled.

In the period of the conflict 4852 persons are missing (including 54 children, 323 women, 410 aged people), (1368 out them, including 169 children, 338 women, 286 aged people were liberated from captivity, 783 persons (including 18 children, 46 women, 69 aged people) are stile in captivity in Armenia up to this day. According to the information of the International Committee of Red Cross, 439 persons have died in captivity. Over one million residents of the occupied territories have become displaced persons.

According to the initial and incomplete information, along

the moral-psychological trauma, the economy of Azerbaijan has suffered damages worth of over US\$ 60 billion.

**Khojali** a town on the road of Khojali–Agdam, Khojali is the centre of the district of the same name. It got the status of a town in 1990. It was occupied on February 26, 1992, by the armed Armenian formations with the support of the Motor-Infantry Regiment 366 of the armed forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States. By occupying Khojali the Armenians wanted to remove the obstacle of strategic importance in the part of the Mountainous Garabag populated by the Azerbaijanis, on the one hand, to wipe out this town from the earth completely, on the other hand. Because, Khojali was a habitation which reflected the historical and cultural traditions of the history of Azerbaijan from the ancient times up to the present period. This special culture is known in history as Khojali-Gedebey culture. Destruction of all the material-cultural monuments, as well as the cemetery of Khojali, one of the ancient cemeteries of the world, by using machinery after the Armenian occupation is a striking example of the Armenian vandalism, as well as an act of violence against the world culture.

From the population of Khojali 613 persons were killed, 487 persons became disabled, 1275 peaceful civilians-aged, children, women, were taken captives, subjected to unimaginable oppression, insult and outrage. The fates of 150 persons are not yet known. Out of 613 persons killed in Khojali are 106 women, 63 children, 70 aged people. In the

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tragedy of Khojali 8 families were murdered completely, 24 children lost both parents, 130 children-one of the parents.

### **Mountainous Garabag**

a region in the west of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It has been occupied by the armed forces of Armenia. By the Mountainous Garabag very often the territory of the former Autonomous Province of the Mountainous Garabag of the Republic of Azerbaijan is meant. Its territory is 44000 skm.

### **Goranboy**

an administrative district of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Its territory is 1791 skm, population – 92100. It is located close to the frontline and was a battle-field in the military operations in 1991-1994.

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### **Mirnaib Hasanoglu**

He was born in 1962 in Ganja, the second biggest town of Azerbaijan.

He has been working as a professional photographer since 1982.

He graduated from Azerbaijan National Institute of Arts in 1989.

The photos taken by him are being published in the press since 1990.

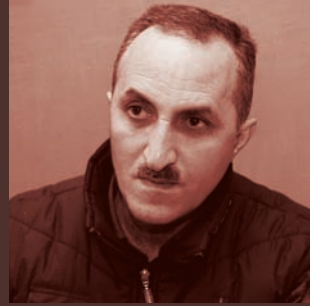
He has been the participant and winner of a number of local and foreign competitions.

He has published books and catalogues consisting of photos.

He had his individual exhibitions in Nant, Strasbourg, Ulan-Bator, Paris, London, Berlin and in various towns of Azerbaijan.

He was elected "Photograph of the Year" in 2000 in Azerbaijan.

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### **Ilgar Jafarov**

Ilgar Jafarov was born in 1960 in Ganja.

He graduated from Azerbaijan Agricultural Institute in 1993, from the Photo-Reporter Faculty of the Photo-Centre attached to the Union of Reporters of the USSR in 1991.

He is the photo-reporter of Azer-Taj national information agency since 1991

He has taken part in a number of international photo competitions.

He has published books and catalogues consisting of photos.

He had his photo-exhibitions abroad and in Azerbaijan.

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