February 20

February 20, 2017 marked the 29th anniversary of the Artsakh liberation movement. On February 20, 1988, reflecting the will of local population, Karabakh's legislature petitioned Soviet leadership bodies of Azerbaijan and Armenia to transfer the autonomy from Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia, aiming to correct Stalin's self-willed decision of 1921.

Artsakh's aspirations were fiercely opposed by the central Soviet authorities, who tried to suppress the first truly democratic movement in the already crumbling USSR. Communist Moscow deployed Soviet troops along with Azerbaijani militia to instill fear and signaling crackdown.

In response to peaceful rallies in Stepanakert, well-organized Azeri mobs attacked and murdered hundreds of ethnic Armenians in towns and villages throughout Azerbaijan, including Sumgait, Baku and Kirovabad (former Armenian Gandzak) that are located hundreds of miles away from Karabakh proper. People were killed and tortured only for being Armenians. Impunity and lack of reaction from then central authorities instigated criminal leadership in Baku to further escalate hostilities and launch a full-scale military aggression against Artsakh.

However, intentions to suppress Artsakh's quest for freedom have failed. Defenders eventually forced the aggressor into a cease-fire, which has been in force since May 1994.

Today, free Republic of Artsakh continues to develop economically, strengthen its defensive capabilities, and undertakes whatever possible to prevent any infringement on Armenians' security and dignity.