
ILHAM ALIYEV FOR VESTNIK KAVKAZA: DOUBLE STANDARDS TOWARDS AZERBAIJAN SHOULD BE ELIMINATED

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The practice of double standards, applied in respect of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan should be discontinued. This will help to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said at the round table titled The hidden problems of Eurasia at the Munich Security Conference, answering the question of the head of the European bureau of the Russian federal information-analytical agency Vestnik Kavkaza, Orhan Sattarov, about Europe's role in resolving of the Karabakh problem.

"I would like to ask President Ilham Aliyev a question. You have mentioned that the principle of the territorial integrity is one of the basic and main principles. The same today was stated by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. She said that Europe is not going to abandon this principle, as it is the main principle. What are your expectations of Europe's role in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and what do you expect from Europe's actions in this conflict? Orhan Sattarov asked the Azerbaijani President.

"The core of the negotiation process of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the OSCE Minsk Group, co-chaired by USA, Russia and France. We do not expect the direct participation of the EU in the negotiations, although the European Commission appointed the Special Representative for the Caucasus, who is engaged in the conflict resolution. From the EU and from all the countries we expect the support of a single standard approach to all the conflicts in the post-Soviet space. We appreciate what Ms. Merkel said today about the territorial integrity, but we want to see this principle applied to all the conflicts, but not only to the separate ones, he said.

"The main reason, due to which Azerbaijan did not sign the association agreement with the European Union - in addition to that we felt it was not an agreement, but the unilateral statement to us - was that they did not want to express a clear position on the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict on the basis of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev pointed out.

Azerbaijan has faced with a policy of double standards in the relations with the EU. "They had these issues in the agreements with Georgia and Moldova, the conflict in Ukraine did not yet exist at that time- but as soon as it came to Azerbaijan, the double standards were applied. Russia was sanctioned for what happened in Ukraine, and Armenia was not subjected to sanctions over what happened in Nagorny Karabakh. These double standards should be eliminated. Of course, this will not lead to an instant solution of the conflict, but if we make joint efforts and pressure the

aggressor, Armenia, to free the lands, then I think that the resolution of the conflict will be achieved soon, the President of Azerbaijan said.

"In our case, as I have said many times, there are four UN Security Council resolutions and documents of the main international body, demanding the immediate withdrawal of the Armenian troops. These resolutions must be implemented. Therefore, we hope that the situations in some post-Soviet countries in terms of the violation of the territorial integrity will lead to the development of a single, rather than a selective approach to all conflicts, including the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev concluded.

Continuing the discussion of the role of other countries as the mediators in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Azerbaijani President expressed hope that the OSCE Minsk Group and its co-chairs will be more active than they are today. "Azerbaijan can not agree with the current situation. The UN Security Council Resolutions, calling for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian troops, were adopted over 20 years ago, but they remain on paper. The three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group are permanent members of the UN Security Council, which means that the resolutions were adopted with their participation, they did not object to these documents - but the resolutions are not implemented. So, these three countries are not enough to put pressure on the aggressor, Armenia, to make it withdraw from the occupied territories, he said.

"We hope that the conflict will be resolved on the basis of these resolutions, since this is the only way to resolve it. It is impossible to justify the aggression. Armenia occupied not only Nagorno Karabakh but also seven regions around Nagorno-Karabakh, where the Armenian population had never lived. In Nagorno Karabakh 30% of the population were of the Azerbaijani origin - and they all were expelled. After that they carried out several so-called referendums in Nagorno-Karabakh, the next will be held in a few days, and they are absolutely illegal and not recognized by anyone in the world, neither by the US and Russia, nor by the EU. All the countries have a clear position that they do not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent entity and the results of the referendums as well, Ilham Aliyev recalled.

"Russia is Azerbaijan's neighbor. It has no direct border with Armenia, but these countries are neighbors in the region. Therefore, I think, it is in interest of Russia to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This conflict is a source of instability, and if the situation gets out of control, the problems will spread in all the countries of the region, the President of Azerbaijan said.

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