
IRAN: 'REFERENDUM' IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH UNACCEPTABLE

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The conduct of a referendum in Nagorno-Karabakh is an inappropriate, wrong and unacceptable step, said Irans Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi.

He made the remarks during a press conference in Tehran on Feb. 20 when asked by an APA correspondent to comment on the referendum to be held Feb. 20 in Azerbaijans Nagorno-Karabakh region, occupied by Armenia, to amend the illegal regimes constitution.

Qasemi said that the referendum will not help settle the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, adding that only dialogue can resolve it.

The spokesman said Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev will pay a visit to Tehran in the coming days.

Irans attitude towards Azerbaijan is clear and precise, stressed Qasemi.

We have a strong relationship and are trying to develop it further, he said, adding. President Ilham Aliyevs visit to Iran will further strengthen the relations between the two countries.

Qasemi recalled the Iranian justice ministers recent visit to Azerbaijan.

Earlier, Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said the illegal referendum constitutes a clear violation of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the norms and principles of international law, and, therefore, has no legal effect whatsoever.

The ministry reiterated that the illegal regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is ultimately nothing other than the product of aggression and occupation.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict entered its modern phase when the Armenian SSR made territorial claims against the Azerbaijani SSR in 1988.

A fierce war broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. As a result of the war, Armenian armed forces occupied some 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory which includes Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts (Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli and Zangilan), and over a million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced people.

The military operations finally came to an end when Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a ceasefire agreement in Bishkek in 1994.

Dealing with the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the OSCE Minsk Group, which was created after the meeting of the CSCE (OSCE after the Budapest summit held in Dec.1994) Ministerial Council in Helsinki on 24 March 1992. The Group's members include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, the United States, France, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Belarus, Finland and Sweden.

Besides, the OSCE Minsk Group has a co-chairmanship institution, comprised of Russian, the US and French co-chairs, which began operating in 1996.

Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 of the UN Security Council, which were passed in short intervals in 1993, and other resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly, PACE, OSCE, OIC, and other organizations require Armenia to unconditionally withdraw its troops from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Kaynak/Source: