
NGO ACTIVISTS HIT BACK AT PASHINIAN

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Representatives of several civic groups deplored on Thursday Prime Minister Nikol Pashinians angry reaction to their criticism of the choice of three new members of Armenias Constitutional Court confirmed by the parliament.

The Western-funded non-governmental organizations voiced earlier this week serious concerns over two of those justices nominated by Pashinians government and a national convention of judges, saying that they were linked to Armenias former leadership.

One of them, Yervand Khundkarian, has headed the Court of Cassation for the last two years while the other, Edgar Shatirian, taught law at a university. Some civic activists claim that their election on Tuesday by the Armenian parliament controlled by the ruling My Step bloc constituted a betrayal of the goals of the 2018 Velvet Revolution that brought Pashinian to power.

The prime minister blasted the critics when he spoke in the National Assembly on Wednesday. He charged that they are primarily concerned with their own parochial interests, rather than the rule of law. He also said they cannot act like ardent defenders of the revolutions values because they played no part in the popular uprising in the first place.

Daniel Ioannisian of the Union of Informed Citizens challenged Pashinian to name names instead of talking abstractly about everyone.

Ioannisian said he and other disgruntled activists have a moral right to speak up on the matter because of their history of human rights advocacy in the country. Besides, he said, many of Pashinians own loyalists used to work for the former regime or did not participate in the revolution for other reasons.

Even if some group wanted to see some people join the Constitutional Court, whats wrong with that? said Levon Barseghian, the head of the Gyumri-based Asparez Journalists Club.

Barseghian insisted that Pashinians administration made bad decisions regarding the new Constitutional Court members. The constitutional crisis in the country has not been solved, he said. The crisis was not about replacing three judges. At issue are radical reforms, including a reform of the Constitutional Court.

For more than a year, Pashinian was locked in a standoff with seven of the nine Constitutional

Court judges installed before the revolution. He pressured them to resign, accusing them of maintaining close ties to the countrys corrupt former rulers and impeding his judicial reforms.

Three of those judges were controversially ousted as a result of constitutional amendments enacted by the current authorities in June. The amendments also required Hrayr Tovmasian to quit as court chairman but remain a judge.

Tovmasian and the ousted judges refused to step down, saying that their removal is illegal and politically motivated. They appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to have them reinstated.

<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30844445.html>

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