ASALA BUZZING ON THE ROAD TO NORMALIZATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND ARMENIA

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After the Second Karabakh War, the statements of Armenia, the Armenian diaspora and the terrorist organization ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia), which is still in existence, raise concern. However, a new actor has been added to those who make statements. A representative of the so-called Karabakh administration is making statements in a similar manner to a terrorist organization[1]. The audacious words in his statements are in line with the statements made by ASALA.

This year, like every year, ASALA continued its racist and aggressive remarks on the anniversary of its establishment. In its statement, ASALA, while advising Armenia, conveyed that it appreciates the initiatives of the ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), which it considers as its supporter ally. Additionally, ASALA declared that it always stands by Armenia in its struggle and will always support Armenia[2].

It is a well-known fact that ASALA acts with the support of the West. ASALA is a murderous organization that massacred dozens of Turkish diplomats. Praising ASALA and its militants indicates a stance in line with this organization. One of the obstacles to the normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia is the lack of a clear definition of terrorism. Armenia openly commemorates the founders of ASALA on its official Twitter account, calling them national heroes[3].

After the 2020 Second Karabakh War, which resulted in Azerbaijan regaining its territory, both ASALA and the so-called republic in Karabakh continue to make statements in a similar vein. In an interview on January 25th, 2023, the so-called Minister of State of the so-called republic stated that the international community must make Azerbaijan pay for what it has done. There is a fact that is persistently denied here: The territories in question belong to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijans statements are not baseless. In fact, a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and Security Council document entitled Legal Opinion on Third Party Obligations with Respect to Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan[4] prepared by Prof. Allain Pellet has been published[5]. The report examines the legal consequences of the direct or indirect involvement of third-party countries and real and legal persons in Armenia's illegal activities, the obligations of third parties in relation to Armenia's activities and the measures that can be taken by the

international community. The report explains in detail that under international law, the secession of Karabakh from Azerbaijan cannot be justified on the basis of the the peoples right to self-determination. This is due to a) the unlawful use of force of Armenia, and b) the violation of Azerbaijans sovereignty and territorial integrity. Therefore, the report concludes that the situation in Karabakh is that of a belligerent occupation by Armenia[6].

Supressing the rhetoric of the terrorist organization ASALA and similar unofficial organizations is an important step to be taken in the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process. Such a situation should not be tolerated and must be ended entirely. But what is the meaning behind the attempts towards the resurgence of terrorism with similar statements and terrorists being commemorated by Armenia? While Türkiye and Azerbaijan are firmly committed to constructive rhetoric such as intensification and acceleration of trade and energy agreements as well as improving diplomatic relations, attempts to hinder the normalization process may have undesirable consequences for the future of the region.

[1] State minister: Karabakh Armenians struggle to live with dignity on their land is also important for the World, news.am, *News*, 25 January 2023, https://news.am/eng/news/741229.html.

[2] ԿՈՉ ՀԱՄԱՅՆ ՀԱՅՈՒԹՅԱՆ Հայաստանի Ազատագրության Հայ Գաղտնի Բանակի հիմնադրման 48-ամյակի առիթով, asala.army, *ASALA*, 19 January 2023, https://www.asala.army/news/ԿՈՉ-ՀԱՄԱՅՆ-ՀԱՅՈՒԹՅԱՆ-Հայաստանի-Ազատագրության-Հայ-Գաղտնի-Բանակի-հիմնադրման-48-ամյակի-առիթով.

[3] Today is the #birthday of Monte #Melkonyan, National Hero of????????, Legend of the #Armenian nation, Commander. His name will always remain in the history of #Armenia. We bow before you, Immortal Hero!, https://twitter.com/armenia/status/1463845349404069902?s=21&t=pbAC-WGMAJn_Gqt_oGk2SA.

[4] Legal Opinion on Third Party Obligations with Respect to Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan, Annex to the letter dated 10 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, Legal Opinion on Third Party Obligations with Respect to Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan, 7-10.

[5] Ali Murat Taşkent, A Flagrant Violation of International Law: The Case Of Nagorno-Karabakh, avim.org.tr, *AVİM*, 31 May 2017, https://avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/A-FLAGRANT-VIOLATION-OF-INTERNATIONAL-LAW-THE-CASE-OF-NAGORNO-KARABAKH.

[6] Taşkent, A Flagrant Violation of International Law: The Case Of Nagorno-Karabakh.

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