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SWITZERLAND'S BIASED STANCE AND ITS HARMFUL EFFECTS ON PEACE EFFORTS

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The Karabakh region, which was liberated from occupation after the 44-Day War and fully reintegrated into Azerbaijan in 2023, is still being mentioned by third parties within the context of the peace treaty process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Additionally, attempts are still being made to turn Karabakh into a topic of contention. Today, considering the point that has been reached in the peace treaty process, the Karabakh Question has ceased to exist as the parties to the treaty have accepted Karabakh as a resolved matter. With Karabakh coming under Azerbaijani control again, the Nikol Pashinyan government has recognized Azerbaijan's sovereignty over this region. This situation, which sparked much reaction from the opposition in Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, has become the subject of one of the disputes between the Diaspora and Pashinyan, who stated that he was looking out for the interests of the current Armenian state and that the idea of Greater Armenia, functioning as a myth, was damaging Armenia.

Certain parties that do not want Azerbaijan and Armenia to develop bilateral relations have adopted a provocative stance on Karabakh, similar to their stance on some other issues that are no longer a problem between the parties (the dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group, the alleged ethnic cleansing in Karabakh, etc.). The West, especially Switzerland, where the Diaspora has a notable presence, continues to agitate on issues that the parties have already resolved amongst each other. This incomprehensible situation, as a manifestation of the anti-peace stance, now constitutes a striking example in the history of Switzerland's questionable relationship with the Diaspora.

19 members of the Swiss Parliament came together to form a group called the Swiss Peace Initiative for (Nagorno) Karabakh. The aim of the initiative is to establish an open dialog with Azerbaijan to ensure the return of Armenians living in Karabakh during the occupation period. The group announced that it will hold its first event on 26 May in Bern. It should be noted that registrations for the event are being made through the official website of the Christian Solidarity International (CSI).[1] The group was formed after a

resolution regarding an initiative titled Peace for (Nagorno) Karabakh: Ensuring the Return of Armenians was adopted by both chambers of the parliament two months ago. Following the adoption of the resolution, the Swiss Federal Council also issued a statement calling on Azerbaijan to ensure the return of Armenians to Karabakh, stating that the right of return is an important principle of international law. The statement also mentioned that Switzerland adopted the resolution to support the establishment of lasting peace in the South Caucasus.[2]

ANCA (Armenian National Committee of America), which is the primary opposing party in the rising anti-peace discourse from the United States, responded to this immediately and expressed its satisfaction with the initiative.[3] Similar news of contentment came from the CSI front.[4] In their statements, both groups arbitrarily referred to the anti-terrorist operation carried out by Azerbaijan in September 2023 as genocide and reiterated the allegations of ethnic cleansing of the displaced Armenians. The statements made by the Armenian authorities and the Nikol Pashinyan government on this issue recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty in Karabakh. In fact, the passports of Armenians who emigrated from Karabakh have the inscription Karabakh, Azerbaijan as the place of birth.[5]

The fact that Switzerland, which makes a point to present presents itself as neutral, has once again revealed its biased relationship with the Diaspora and Christian organizations. This brings to mind the fact that even the laws that were the subject of scrutiny in the ECtHR (European Court of Human Rights) Perinçek v. Switzerland case are biased. As is known, Switzerland convicted Doğu Perinçek on the basis of a statute within its domestic law punishing genocide denial. At the appeal stage, the verdict of the Lausanne Police Court was upheld and an appeal was made again at the Federal Court level. The Federal Court rejected this request, which exhausted domestic legal options, at which point Perinçek took the case to the ECtHR. The ECtHR expressed that statements that serve the requirements of a democratic society and do not constitute hate speech are considered within the scope of freedom of expression and ruled that Article 10 of the ECHR (European Convention on Human Rights) had been violated.[6] As can be seen, when it comes to the Armenian events, Switzerland removes the guise of a democratic and free European country and instead displays a biased attitude to the extent of violating freedom of expression. The Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno Karabakh we are observing today constitutes a similar inconsistency.

Azerbaijan and Armenia are conducting negotiations free from the interference of third states and these negotiations are yielding results, as evidenced by the agreement on the final text of the peace treaty. The South Caucasus seems to be taking firm steps towards peace, which involves the expectation that Armenia will take concrete actions to ensure the permanence of peace (such as constitutional amendment, Zangezur Corridor, dissolution of the Minsk Group, efforts in the normalization process with Türkiye). Karabakh has ceased to be a problem between the parties and is no longer the subject of negotiations. Starting an initiative under the auspices of a parliament and with the support of the CSI by allocating manpower and resources on a subject that even the main actors of the process no longer talk about cannot be interpreted as being well-intentioned.

In conclusion, Switzerland has added a new item to its long list biased policies. The

Diaspora, which is one of the biggest obstacles to peace, prosperity, and stability in the region, has clearly asserted itself through the actions of ANCA and CSI. Although it is said that the aim of the initiative is to establish lasting peace in the South Caucasus, neither Switzerland nor the Diaspora have ever invited the parties to reconciliation since the beginning of the process. On the contrary, they have attempted to undermine peace with provocative statements. The condemnation of such attempts by the Armenian authorities, who recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty in Karabakh, would reassure the other side and be seen as a concrete step that is needed in the process meant to result in the signing of the peace treaty. Unfortunately, Switzerland continues its anti-peace stance, and the Armenian authorities continue to ignore this damaging attitude towards the peace process. In the end, Switzerland should abandon its unconstructive stance, exposed to the world after the Perinçek case, and follow the developments by adopting an impartial position.

*Image: *Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno-Karabakh*

[1] Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno-Karabakh, accessed 22 May 2025, https://www.swisspeacekarabakh.com/en

[2] Swiss Lawmakers to Launch Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Initiative, *Asbarez*, 20 May 2025, https://asbarez.com/swiss-lawmakers-to-launch-nagorno-karabakh-peace-initiative/

[3] ANCA Welcomes Launch of Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno Karabakh, *Armenian National Commitee of America*, 20 May 2025, https://anca.org/press-release/anca-welcomes-launch-of-swiss-peace-initiative-for-nagorno-karabakh/.

[4] Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno Karabakh to Launch in Bern, *Christian Solidarity International*, 20 May 2025, https://www.csi-int.org/news/swiss-peace-initiative-for-nagorno-karabakh-to-launch-in-bern/.

[5] Khagan Isayev, Azerbaijan Listed as Place of Birth in Karabakh Armenians' Passports, *Caliber*, 8 April 2025, https://caliber.az/en/post/azerbaijan-listed-as-place-of-birth-in-karabakh-armenians-passports.

[6] 28 Ocak AİHM Perinçek - İsviçre Duruşmasının Işığında Türk-Ermeni Sorunu, *AVİM*, February 2015, https://avim.org.tr/en/Rapor/28-OCAK-AIHM-PERINCEK-ISVICRE-DURUSMASININ-ISIGINDA-TURK-ERMENI-SORUNU.

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