

# FOR THE TSAR AND AGAINST PEACE: ON THE HOSTILITY OF THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA'S NATIONALISTS TO THE FUTURE PEACE TREATY BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA

In 1878, during the Russian-Ottoman war, another nationalist revolt took place in Zeytun, and, Russia imposed the mention of reforms for the Ottoman Armenians (but not for the Muslim majority) in the peace treaty of San Stefano. The relevant article in the treaty was rewritten the same year (after a firm intervention by the United Kingdom) that was more acceptable to the Ottoman government.

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**O**n 13 March 2025, Azerbaijan and Armenia announced that the text of peace treaty between the two state was finalized, as both sides finally agreed on each article. Three days later, Arsen Torosyan, a member of the Armenian Parliament, chairman of the Health Committee and board member of the ruling party Civil Contract, tweeted:<sup>1</sup>

“Our nation has to know its ‘heroes’

There is a group of Armenian lobbyists based in Washington, DC, known as Armenian National Committee of America @ANCA\_DC, who are actually the U.S. branch of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), or Dashnaksutyun.





These guys' main goal has always been to diminish Armenia's sovereignty and independence and to justify that we cannot live without Russia. This is the most ironic part of their job: based in DC, they lobby for Moscow. All this is done with the sauce of patriotism, nationalism, Armenian values preservation, etc."

This courageous statement did not receive the attention it deserves. The aim of this article is to demonstrate the accuracy of this tweet based on three aspects: The historical background, the recent (2022-2025) moves towards a peace treaty, and the current campaign of support for the former leaders of the (now self-dissolved) Armenian separatist entity in Karabakh.

**Far from being limited to words, the Russian support for the Armenian separatists was materialized by a supply in weapons and ammunitions for the future rebels in eastern Anatolia, a supply that made possible the Armenian nationalist insurrections in 1914-1915.**

## Historical Background

A whole book would barely be enough to deal with the use of Armenian nationalism by Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union (USSR), and contemporary Russia. Only some key elements will be exposed here. The first Armenian nationalist revolt in the Ottoman Empire took place in Zeytun in 1862, and was largely inspired by Russian Armenians.<sup>2</sup> In 1872, a part of the Armenians of Van province (TR: vilayet) asked to become Russian.<sup>3</sup> In 1878, during the Russian-Ottoman war, another nationalist revolt took place in Zeytun, and, Russia imposed the mention of reforms for the Ottoman Armenians (but not for the Muslim majority) in the peace treaty of San Stefano. The relevant article in the treaty was rewritten the same year (after a firm intervention by the United Kingdom) that was more acceptable to the Ottoman government.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, until 1880, Benjamin Disraeli, a self-described Turkophile, was in power.

General Arthur Tchérép-Spiridovitch was sent to the United States in 1907 to defend the Tsarist regime and to incite the American Armenians to seditious activities against the Ottoman Empire and their Western supporters to "war" against the Turks.<sup>5</sup> He went there as "special representative of the czar."<sup>6</sup>



Regardless, the major turning point was in 1912 when ARF (in conflict with the Tsar's authorities since 1900s) reconciled with them, at the initiative of St-Petersburg.<sup>7</sup> Antuan Bérézovsky-Godinsky, a Russian agent previously expelled as a trouble-maker by Austria-Hungary, travelled in Eastern Anatolia in 1913 and delivered a self-explanatory speech to Armenians of Bitlis:

"[...] You must arm yourself. [...] You know well, probably, that all our [diplomatic] representatives in Turkey jointly work with the Dashnaks [...]"

Russia does not want, and never wanted to send you missionaries. She prefers to send you her cannons and soldiers instead of missionaries. [...] I have had a lot of relations with the competent people of the Russian government."<sup>8</sup>

Sent in 1912 to Paris, General Tchérép-Spiridovitch re-launched his campaign of 1907-1908, advocating the dismembering of the Ottoman Empire and the "annexation" of Eastern Anatolia by Russia.<sup>9</sup> Incidentally, it needs to be noticed that Tchérép-Spiridovitch finished his life as a professional anti-Semitic agitator in the UK<sup>10</sup> and later in the US, being a ghost-writer for Henry Ford's *The International Jew*<sup>11</sup> and publishing in New York (under his own name) another book, recommended by the World Nazi propaganda service.<sup>12</sup>

Far from being limited to words, the Russian support for the Armenian separatists was materialized by a supply in weapons and ammunitions for the future rebels in eastern Anatolia, a supply that made possible the Armenian nationalist insurrections in 1914-1915.<sup>13</sup> By comparison, France refused to provide weapons to Armenian nationalists against the Ottoman Empire until 1916<sup>14</sup> and, in UK, the collection of funds to clothe and equip the Armenian volunteers of the Russian army, starting on 2 April 1915 (well after Russia), was a private initiative.<sup>15</sup>

The Soviets imitated the Tsar, using the Dashnaks as willing executioners to crush the patriots of Azerbaijan<sup>16</sup> and Central Asia, with the bloodiest methods, in 1918-1919.<sup>17</sup> In 1928-1929, in the context of the Stalinist radicalization of the bilateral crisis with Ankara, Moscow funded a combination of Armenian nationalists, Kurdish nationalists (Hoybun) and Turkish monarchists.<sup>18</sup> In 1939, Türkiye signed bilateral agreements with the UK and France, then a trilateral alliance with the two Western European democracies, causing the ire of the totalitarian powers (Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Stalinist USSR), now linked by another triple alliance.<sup>19</sup> USSR claimed Kars and Ardahan for Soviet Armenia and organized an irredentist agitation inside its borders.<sup>20</sup> A part of the

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diaspora's Armenians was sensitive to this agitation. René Massigli, the French ambassador in Ankara (dismissed by the Vichy regime at the end of 1940 after protests of the Nazi diplomacy, then de Gaulle's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1943 to 1944<sup>21</sup>) reported on 20 October 1939:

"I cannot stress enough the need to monitor the actions of Armenian circles, whether in the Levant or elsewhere.

It is important, indeed, not to lose sight of the fact that the Armenians have always been the instruments of Russian policy against Turkey [Türkiye]: Precisely as Russian imperialism is reborn and Turkey is drawing closer to us, we must reckon with the exploitation, by Soviet agents, of the Armenians' tenacious hatred for their former persecutors."<sup>22</sup>

The Stalinist claims on Kars and Ardahan were reiterated in 1945-1948. They were endorsed by a "sacred union" of the Armenian diaspora's organizations.<sup>23</sup>

The first book promoting the "Armenian Genocide" claims in a Western language was an English translation, published in January 1965, of a Soviet book printed in 1963.<sup>24</sup> The *Pravda* supported these claims in long articles published in April 1975 and April 1985.<sup>25</sup> More concretely, the building of a memorial was discussed at least in 1963, approved in 1964, announced in 1965<sup>26</sup> and built in 1967. The 10<sup>th</sup> point of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA)'s declaration of principle, published on 10 July 1978, explained: "Soviet Armenia is the unique and irreplaceable basis of the Armenian people; it is a free Armenian land; the USSR is a friendly country."<sup>27</sup> Even after the Soviet Union stopped supporting the Armenian terrorism, in mid-1983, ASALA continued to spread the Soviet propaganda on late Ottoman history about the "Jewish bankers behind [Sultan] Abdülhamit" and the "Jewish-Masonic conspiracy behind the Committee of Union and Progress."<sup>28</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union hardly changed anything. The Armenian separatists of Karabakh were used as a pawn, and directly supported by Russia, not unlike the Russian separatists of Transnistria against Moldova and the Abkhaz separatists against Georgia at the same time. The Russian Duma “recognized” the Armenian genocide claims as early as 1995<sup>29</sup>, well before the French (1998-2001), Canadian (2004), and German (2015) parliaments. The Ukrainian and Georgian parliaments, for instance, never adopted any resolution in this regard.

From 1971 to the collapse of the regime in December 2024, ARF was a loyal ally of the Baath regime in Syria, since 1980s has been allied with Iran, and since 1996-1997 and even more since 2005, has been an ally of Hezbollah.<sup>30</sup> In other words, ARF was integrated to the Iranian network even before the emergence of the Russian-Iranian alliance.

### The Game of Russia Against Peace And Its Armenian Nationalist Pawns (2022-2025)

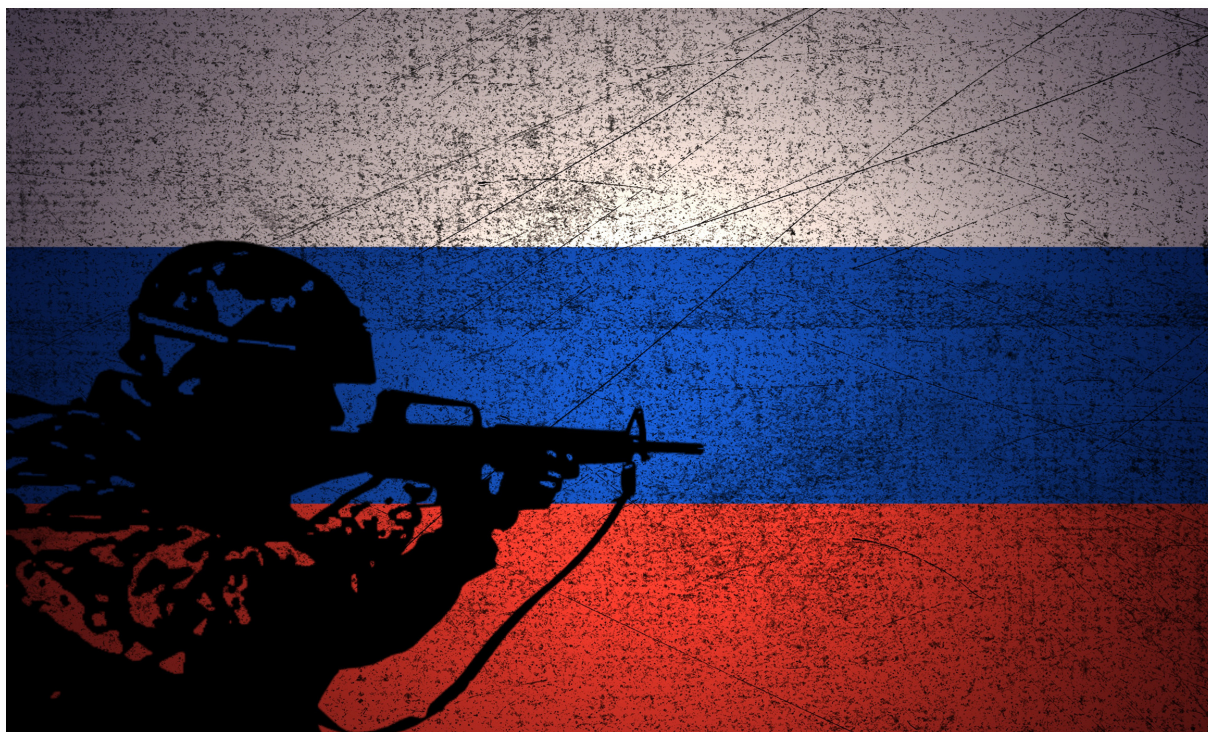
After the ceasefire agreements of November 2020 and January 2021, Russia established a new military facility

in Armenia. In February 2022, the Armenian delegation was the only one to support Russia in the vote deciding the suspension of this country from the Council of Europe.<sup>31</sup> As late as August 2022, Armenia took part in a drone competition with Russia and Iran.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the peace process did not advance. The situation changed drastically after the clashes of September 2022 at the (not yet delineated) Armenia-Azerbaijani border. Kazakhstan vetoed the Armenian demand for an intervention by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Russia, facing considerable -and unexpected- difficulties in Ukraine,<sup>33</sup> did not intervene either.

As early as 6 October 2022, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan co-signed the Prague Declaration, the first formal recognition, by the Armenian government, of Karabakh as an Azerbaijani territory:

“Armenia and Azerbaijan confirmed their commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and the Alma Ata 1991 Declaration through which both recognize each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. They confirmed it would be a basis for the work of the border delimitation commissions and that the





next meeting of the border commissions would take place in Brussels by the end of October.”<sup>34</sup>

In 2023, Armenia did not take part in the annual drone competition organized by Russia and Iran. In September of the same year, the last elements of the Armenian army finally withdrew from Khankendi, just before the Azerbaijani army liberated the territory controlled by the last remnant of the Armenian separatist entity in Karabakh (self-dissolved on 1 January 2024). In absolute contrast with the war of 2020, the Armenian army did not fire a single shot to defend the separatists. Prime Minister Pashinyan confirmed on a written form his recognition of the Azerbaijani territory, this time with the number of square kilometres, which makes clear he recognizes both the whole Karabakh and the enclaves as Azerbaijani territories.<sup>35</sup> In December 2023, for the first time in history, Armenia and Azerbaijan supported each other on the diplomatic field, Yerevan withdrawing its candidacy to the organization of the COP29 in exchange of the Azerbaijani support for the Armenian participation in the bureau of the conference.

Then, the delineation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border made unprecedented progress during the year 2024,<sup>36</sup> including the peaceful restitution of four Azerbaijani villages, occupied since 1992 but located outside of Karabakh. Meanwhile, Armenia ended the Russian control of the Yerevan airport, announced its suspension of its participation in the Collective Security

Treaty Organisation (CSTO), and then confirmed its plan to eventually depart from the said organization.<sup>37</sup> Armenia made important gestures toward Türkiye as well. On 14 April 2024, Antranik Kocharyan, chairman of the Armenian Parliament's Defense and Security Committee, stated to *Radio Free Europe's* Armenian Service:

“This is a simple goal for us to know the addresses and locations of each of our 1.5 million compatriots [who allegedly perished in the ‘Armenian Genocide’]. It is very important for the building of our relations [with Türkiye] in the future as well. 24 April is approaching. Was it 1.5 million, two million or less? It should be strictly addressed. But if we don't record it, the other side can always say that no such thing happened.”

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**Since the end of 2023, ARF and other Armenian nationalists have vehemently supported the past leaders of the defunct separatist Armenian entity in Karabakh who were arrested by Azerbaijan.**

The wording was calibrated for an Armenian audience, but the meaning is clear; neither Armenia nor anybody else can produce the list of the “1.5 million Armenian victims” for the simple reason that the total losses of the Ottoman Armenians from 1914 to 1915 were in truth about 600/650,000,<sup>38</sup> including 150,000 who died of malnutrition and illness during the relocation of 300,000 of them to the Caucasus by the Russian army and ARF in 1915-1916,<sup>39</sup> 50,000 who died during the epidemics in Yerevan in 1918-1919,<sup>40</sup> and the various fighters (volunteers for the Russian army in 1914-1918, volunteers for the Greek army in 1920-1922 and loyal Armenians in the Ottoman army in 1914-1918) killed in action.

Then, on 29 January 2015, Nikol Pashinyan stated: “We need to revisit the history of the Armenian Genocide. We need to understand what happened, why it happened, and through whom we perceived the events.”<sup>41</sup> He also pointed out the role of the Soviet Union, which followed a political agenda. As a result, it is a fact that the less Russia is involved in Armenia, the more the peace process with Azerbaijan and the reconciliation with Türkiye advance. Given the historical background, this is by no means a surprise.

The day after the Prague Declaration, the “parliament” of the separatist entity in Khankendi asked for the “recognition of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic”;<sup>42</sup> “Given the recognition of independence of Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic by the Russian Federation and the reunification of the aforementioned territories, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions to Russia on September 30, 2022.” The day this declaration was published, a huge portrait of the President of Russia Vladimir Putin was deployed near Khankendi.<sup>43</sup> Even after the collapse of the so-called “republic”, the opposition in Armenia continued to consider any concession to Azerbaijan to be a betrayal, and connected this issue with the supposedly indispensable alliance with Russia.<sup>44</sup>

Months after the clashes of September 2022, *The Armenian Weekly*, an ARF organ, blamed Nikol Pashinyan for starting to distance Armenia from the CSTO:

“The planned CSTO peacekeeping exercises, unveiled by the Russian Ministry of Defense on the first day of the New Year, would logically bolster the peacekeeping mission in Artsakh and send a defiant message to Ankara and Baku following joint Turkish-Azeri drills which saw Turkey keep its forces ominously stationed in place — as was done in the runup to the 2020 aggression.”<sup>45</sup>

Apparently unimpressed by the hemorrhagic losses<sup>46</sup> of the Russian army (especially for the armored vehicles and artillery), Franck “Mourad” Papazian, a member of ARF’s world bureau who is also co-chairman of the Coordination Council of France’s Armenian Associations (CCAF) stated in 2024:

“Restoring relations with Russia is a strategic priority for Armenia. You cannot have an anti-Russian government in Armenia. Looking at the map, we see that Armenia is surrounded by enemies, and the friend and partner we had has almost turned into an enemy. [...] The EU wants to delegate Turkey to deal with matters in the Caucasus, but Turkey is not a neutral country, so there is reason to be worried. France won’t send troops to Armenia if there is a war.”<sup>47</sup>

In May of the same year, he even called the Caucasus “not a French zone but [...] a Russian or Soviet zone.”<sup>48</sup> This has been his consistent position.<sup>49</sup> The same man was banned from entering Armenia in 2022, officially because he organized an aggressive demonstration against Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan in Paris,<sup>50</sup> unofficially because he was suspected attempting to instigate a coup d’état.

Former ASALA spokesman Jean-Marc “Ara” Toranian, who is, for reasons impossible to verify with open sources only, the less virulent critic of Prime Minister Pashinyan among the Armenian nationalists, regardless criticized, as late as 30 December 2024, the pro-Western turn of Armenia and its decreasing dependency on Russia.<sup>51</sup> He implicitly compared the peace process to the collaboration of the Vichy regime of France with Nazi Germany during the Second World War, a wording unprecedented in his writings, regarding any Armenian government.

Another contributor to Toranian’s website (by far the most read of the French Armenian websites), known in March 2022 for his inflammatory support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine<sup>52</sup> and for having advocated massive cyber-attacks against the Western powers in December of the same year,<sup>53</sup> insisted in March 2024 on blaming the



changes of the Armenian policy, not only toward Azerbaijan and Türkiye, but also toward Russia.<sup>54</sup> He repeated the Russian narrative that the rapprochement with the West will lead Armenia to a fate similar to the one of Ukraine. Still another contributor, also notorious for his fierce support for Russian President Putin,<sup>55</sup> reiterated his views in February 2025, including to vituperate the rapprochement between Armenia and the West, and even to attack the President of France Emmanuel Macron directly.<sup>56</sup>

Remarkably, these articles and declarations have continued so far, in spite of the collapse of the Baath dictatorship in Syria, of the serious weakening of Hezbollah in Lebanon and of the Iranian regime military losses on its own soil during the year 2024.

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### **For The Men of Vladimir Putin**

Since the end of 2023, ARF and other Armenian nationalists have vehemently supported the past leaders of the defunct separatist Armenian entity in Karabakh who were arrested by Azerbaijan.<sup>57</sup> Their trajectories show that the solidarity among the Armenian nationalists, especially for those involved in the only case of territorial expansion of Armenia since the formal attribution of Zanguezur to Armenia by Soviet Russia in 1921, is not the sole reason for this activism.

A Russian citizen, Ruben Vardanyan became a billionaire in Russia during the 1990s and 2000s, namely at a time when the Russian big business knew nothing but the law of jungle. He did not stop there, as “records from the Troika Laundromat leak show that employees at his bank built and ran the Troika Laundromat, an all-purpose financial system that took in US\$4.6 billion from 2006 through early 2013.”<sup>58</sup> In 2022, he was designated by Ukraine as one of the sources of funding for the Russian invasion and he is, as a result, wanted by the Ukrainian Secret Service (SSU, domestic intelligence agency).<sup>59</sup> The anti-corruption organization founded by Alexei Navalny shares the same conclusion.<sup>60</sup>

It was precisely in 2022 that Vardanyan went to Karabakh. He was appointed as “State minister” in



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December of that year. The date is important; this was after then Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, an opponent to peace with Azerbaijan and normalization with Türkiye, resigned and after the Prague declaration by which Armenia and Azerbaijan recognized each other's territorial integrity (October 2022). Before 2022, Vardanyan had been involved in Armenian nationalist activities, such as the Aurora Prize, co-established with Samantha Power, author of a book (*A Problem from Hell*, 2002) where the Armenian genocide allegation is entirely based on the "testimony" of ARF terrorist Soghomon Tehlirian. Yet, this testimony was proved misleading even by his own memoirs, by ARF archives and by his obituary in the *Armenian Review*, an ARF journal.<sup>61</sup> Regardless, as this example shows, Vardanyan was focusing on Türkiye, not Azerbaijan. His sudden interest in the Karabakh issue,

in sharp contrast with his absence of initiative during the war of 2020, could not have been a mere coincidence.

Moreover, if he was only concerned about the international sanctions, he had the possibility of moving to Armenia (or another country with an important immigration of Russian businesspeople, such as the United Arab Emirates), and to devote himself to strictly economic activities. That is why he is often considered to have been sent to Khankendi by the Kremlin, first to impede the recovery of this territory by Azerbaijan, then to be replaced by any possible means Nikol Pashinyan as the Armenian Prime Minister.<sup>62</sup> What is sure, anyway, is that he has publicly and actively supported the Iranian-Armenian alliance,<sup>63</sup> while Iran is an ally of Russia and while the Iranian government is not in favor -this is the least that can be said- of the policy conducted by Pashinyan.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention "considers that the allegations against Mr. Vardanyan are particularly serious"<sup>64</sup> and are based, at least for a part, on material evidence, such as the "military equipment" discovered.



Arayik Haroutiounyan, also incarcerated and now on trial in Baku, openly ordered the bombing of Ganja during the war of 2020.<sup>65</sup> Only civilian buildings were destroyed and damaged during the bombing. 26 civilians and no soldier were killed, dozens of civilians (and once again, no military person) were wounded. Ganja never was close to the frontline at any moment of the Karabakh wars (1992-1994, 2016 and 2020). Yet, according to the article 25 of Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, annexed to Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, The Hague, 18 October 1907, "The attack or bombardment of towns, villages, habitations or buildings which are not defended, is prohibited." Similarly, the 1<sup>st</sup> Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts, of 8 June 1977, states:

"4. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. Indiscriminate attacks are:

- a) those which are not directed at a specific military objective;
- b) those which employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or
- c) those which employ a method or means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited as required by this Protocol; and consequently, in each such case, are of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction.

5. Among others, the following types of attacks are to be considered as indiscriminate:

- a) an attack by bombardment by any methods or means which treats as a single military objective a number of clearly separated and distinct military objectives located in a city, town, village or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects; and
- b) an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated."

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that Azerbaijan is fully entitled to prosecute him. It is equally clear that he has been a cog of Russian expansionism. In February 2022, he stated:

"On behalf of the authorities and the people of the Republic of Artsakh, I welcome the decision of Russian President Vladimir Putin to recognize the independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. The right of nations to self-determination and to build their own state is inalienable for every nation and is a fundamental principle of international law [sic]. We congratulate the peoples of Donetsk and Luhansk on this historic event. We hope that lasting peace and stability will once again be established in this once prosperous country."<sup>66</sup>

To defend these more than dubious persons, ARF announced the initiative titled "Europeans for Artsakh," which is a thin cover for this Armenian extremist party. In January 2024, the demonstrations of Paris,<sup>67</sup> Athens,<sup>68</sup> and Brussels<sup>69</sup> each rallied only some dozens of persons, and those in Romania, even less. No similar initiative has been organized after these failures, and one demonstration in Brussels in March 2025 gathered at most... ten persons.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, ARF's demand to ban Azerbaijani athletes from the Paris Olympic games was not accepted.<sup>71</sup> Despite costly efforts, the Western media coverage remains minimal, largely due to the invasion of Ukraine, and to the largely commented choices of the Donald Trump administration of the US.

CCAF announced a complaint against Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in February 2025,<sup>72</sup> but this complaint was a sign of despair than anything else. No government has supported this complaint. Except some X (*Twitter*) posts from the (small) Armenian National Committee of UK (a branch of ARF), other groups of the Armenian Diaspora have shown no particular interest in this initiative. The lawyer representing CCAF is Sévag

Torossian, who was never involved in any important court case of the “Armenian cause” (trial against the Turkish consulate in Paris, defense of Jean-Marc “Ara” Toranian, intervention of CCAF against Doğu Perinçek in front of the European Court of Human Rights’ [ECtHR] Grand Chamber, defense of Charjoun leader Loris Toufanian, sentenced in June 2023 for having damaged the door of the Azerbaijani embassy in Paris, etc.). None of the lawyers who pleaded the above cases joined him, an indication of the lack of validity of the legal arguments he has used before the court.

And here arrives the most regrettable aspect of the issue: the recent (March 2025) vote at the European Parliament, endorsing ARF’s claims on the pro-Russian war criminals currently on trial in Baku. Blaming only prejudices and Armenian lobbying organizations would be a mistake. Nationalist Armenian groups are virtually without audience in countries such as Hungary and are extremely weak in Spain, Ireland, Denmark, etc. whereas Türkiye managed to defeat several resolutions on the

tragedy of 1915 in the European Parliament in 1985, 1986, 2007, 2008, 2009, etc.

## Conclusion

Arsen Torosyan’s appraisal of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation is fully justified. Armenia is recovering its sovereignty in choosing the way of peace instead of opting for endless war and racial hatred.<sup>73</sup> The sooner this situation will be explained to those who are still misled by ARF propaganda, the better will it be for everyone. For the first time, Armenia is conducting a policy independent from the toxic organizations of the Diaspora, and from Russia and Iran. This is a necessary step for the opening of channels of communications between Türkiye, Azerbaijan and, beyond, Central Asia. This is in the interest of Turkic states as well as of EU members -but this must be fully understood and, if necessary, demonstrated, like in this article.

## Endnotes

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