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FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

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Abstract: *This article covers Turkey-Armenia relations as well as domestic and international developments of Armenia in the period of August to December of 2020. The period has witnessed disastrous developments for Armenia, starting with inapt handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, sharp downturn in the economy, disappointing failures and visible incompetence of the Pashinyan Government to fulfill its promises and to carry out reforms, resorting to playing the radical nationalism card, pinning the blame on foreign enemies (on the usual suspects, Azerbaijan and Turkey) so as to cling to power, bellicose rhetoric leading to war with Azerbaijan followed by a humiliating defeat. As a result, large swath of occupied Azerbaijan's territory was recovered, giving the upper hand to Azerbaijan at the eventual negotiations for the final settlement. Turkey, having unwaveringly and staunchly expressed its support for Azerbaijan, was officially declared by Armenia to be the enemy, bringing relations to its yet lowest ebb.*

Keywords: *Nikol Pashinyan, war with Azerbaijan, Artsakh (Armenian occupied Nagorno Karabakh), Turkey-Armenia Relations*

Öz: *Bu incelemede Ermenistan'ın iç ve dış dinamiklerinde ve Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkilerinde Ağustos-Aralık 2020 ayları arasındaki gelişmeler ele alınmaktadır. Ele aldığımız dönem Ermenistan bakımından felaket olarak nitelendirilebilecek gelişmelere sahne olmuştur. COVID-19*

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pandemisinde kötü bir sınav verilmiş, ekonomide ciddi bir gerileme gözlenmiş, Paşinyan hükümeti halka vaatlerini yerine getirmede ve reformları gerçekleştirmede vahim yanlışlarını ve beceriksizlik ve yeteneksizliklerini örtebilmek, iktidarı sürdürebilmek amacıyla aşırı milliyetçilik kartına başvurmuş, suçu dış düşmanlara (her zaman olduğu gibi Türkiye ve Azerbaycan'a) yüklemiş, saldırgan tutumu Azerbaycan ile savaşa neden olmuş ve sonunda tam bir hezimete uğramıştır. Savaş sonunda Azerbaycan ordusu işgal altındaki topraklarının büyük bir kısmını geri almış ve öngörülen nihai barış anlaşması müzakereleri için güçlü bir konuma gelmiştir. Bu savaşta Azerbaycan'ı kararlı ve güçlü bir şekilde destekleyen Türkiye'yi Ermenistan resmen düşman olarak ilan etmiş, ilişkiler bugüne kadarki en düşük noktaya ulaşmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Nikol Paşinyan, Azerbaycan ile savaş, Artsakh (Ermenistan işgalindeki Dağlık Karabağ), Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkileri*

1. Domestic developments in Armenia

The deadly fighting that erupted on the Azerbaijan-Armenian border in the strategic Tovuz region on 11-12-13 July with 17 casualties was the harbinger of the difficult days ahead. In the meantime, internal opposition was becoming vociferous. Four major opposition parties, spearheaded by ARF-Dashnaktsutyun strongly criticized the government with a joint declaration on 11 July concerning its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met on 11 August with President Armen Sarkisian to review pressing issues, reportedly, the fighting at the border with Azerbaijan, the ongoing pandemic and the economic fallout of the crisis. Revealing for the future, Pashinyan told the president:

“It is important to note that the military rhetoric being advanced by the leadership of Azerbaijan for years that advanced the myth that the Azerbaijani army had superiority over the Armenian armed forces, collapsed in a flash following ‘Tovuz’ incidents. To my mind, this has led to a completely new geopolitical and military-political situation in the region. By and large, this comes to strengthen Armenia’s long-standing position, which has been adhered to by all Armenian authorities and governments, namely that the Karabakh conflict has no military solution – it can be resolved exclusively through peaceful means. This is a reality that must be reckoned with.”

Sharing the Prime Minister’s views, President A. Sarkisian added the following:

“In the early 1990’s, when I served as ambassador to many European countries, including NATO, many diplomats and military experts told me that our efforts were doomed to failure, since we are a small country, we do not have a powerful army, while Azerbaijan has a huge army and is being backed by the neighboring country. A few years later the same people told me that Armenia has the most powerful army in the South Caucasus. Recent events have shown that Armenia has the most powerful army in the South Caucasus, which cannot be defeated. The army is not only weapons, discipline and readiness; the Armenian army boasts a high spirit that no one has in the region. I am happy that those people’s suspicions about the Armenian army were dispelled.”¹

The economy was already in dire straits as a 2.6% decline was forecast early in the year. At the end of the third quarter, hard currency reserves stood at 2.5

1 “President, Prime Minister Discuss Pressing Issues Facing Armenia”, *Asbarez*, August 12, 2020, <https://asbarez.com/196144/president-prime-minister-discuss-pressing-issues-facing-armenia/>.

billion US dollars. Net external reserves amounted to 1.8 billion. A major input of the Armenian economy; remittances of workers abroad; have decreased by 15.3% to 893.3 million dollars in the period of January-July compared to the same period of the past year. According to the projection of the governor of Armenian Central Bank made on 15 September, the year 2020 would see a 6.2% negative growth rate. Overall economic activity in October 2020 saw an 8.1% decline compared to October 2019. Sales and services sectors have decreased by 21%. Foreign trade decreased by 19%, with imports decreasing by 26%.

Pashinyan appeared on 14 August in BBC's "Hardtalk" program. The moderator started with a harsh assessment, saying, "When I look at Armenia today, it seems many Armenians feel that the hopes of the 'velvet revolution' have been dashed". He also touched upon the Armenian government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, saying that it has been a real failure. He also reflected, on other issues, including the occupation of Azerbaijan territory and Nagorno Karabakh conflict, on the developments around the Constitutional Court of Armenia, noting that the removal of the three judges were connected with the detained former President Robert Kocharyan's case². Pashinyan's remarks of denial were not convincing.

Former President Serzh Sargsyan held a press conference on 19 August. Having barely held any press conference during his tenure in 2008-2018, this unexpected move gave rise to much speculation. However, not much of substance came out of it. He criticized those blaming Russia provoking the Tovuz fighting. He said, "Russia has provided Armenia with tremendous support, and it is unacceptable to accuse it of provoking the war". He also said, "Russia is our strategic ally. Spreading such ideas is ignorance and accusing an ally of provoking a war is betrayal, is impermissible".

Pashinyan chaired another sitting of the National Security Council on 21 August, the previous being held on 10 July. He praised the "victorious battles" of the Armenian army in Tovuz and urged Azerbaijan not to speak to Armenia in the language of force, deeming it a "hopeless rhetoric". He went on to say, "the victorious battles of July proved that there is no military solution to the Karabakh issue. It is time for the Azerbaijani authorities to accept this if there is a military solution to the Karabakh issue, then the people of Karabakh have solved it long ago."³

2 "HARDtalk's Stephen Sackur to Pashinyan: People's hopes seem to have been dashed", *Panorama.am*, August 14, 2020, <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2020/08/14/HARDtalk-Pashinyan/2343886>

3 "The victorious battles in July proved that there is no military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. PM", *I News*, August 21, 2020, <https://www.ilurer.am/en/2020/08/21/The-victorious-battles-in-July-proved-that-there-is-no-military-solution-to-the-Nagorno-Karabakh-co/298050>

The protests by the opposition, with ARF-Dashnaksutyun in the lead, against the education reform culminated in calls for the resignation of the Minister of Education. On 28 August, the Minister rejected those demands saying, “my resignation is not a matter of discussion”. He accused the protesters of lying on a number of claims including “they lie when they say that Anatolia is written in textbooks instead of Armenian Highland”. The Armenian Catholicos of Etchmiadzin Karekin II also did not spare his comments, saying that the Ministry did not make “sufficient efforts” to cooperate with the Church and demanded that Armenian church history should remain compulsory in the curriculum.

The European Bank of Reconstruction and Development announced in August that its investments in the Amulsar gold mine were due to end as protest obstructing work had been renewed at the mine site.

On 1 September, a program of Diaspora Armenian specialists of the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs was launched with the aim to prepare a path to facilitate repatriation. The representative of ARF-Dashnaksutyun noted that “during the previous government and during this government” they presented a proposal to develop a comprehensive strategy on repatriation with state sponsorship. High Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs informed the public that following the 4 August explosion in Beirut, more than 1,100 Lebanese Armenians had flown to Armenia as of 2 September. He further said that “our goal is to repatriate 2 million Armenians over the next 30 years.”⁴ The Prime Minister went even further, saying that the population of Armenia should reach at least 5 million by 2050. Azerbaijan took legal issue with the settlement of Lebanese Armenian families in Nagorno Karabakh, exposing it as “illegal settlement”.

In this context, there was a dire warning in the international press. *EU Reporter* on 23 September wrote of alarming reports that Armenia has been relocating Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) terrorists from Syria and Iraq to the occupied territories of Nagorno Karabakh to prepare for future hostilities and train Armenian militias. It was further alleged that “according to Cairo 24 News Agency and other reliable local sources, Armenia went so far as to let its top-level career diplomats negotiate a transfer plan with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan”.⁵

Armenian Foreign Minister announced on 1 September that Armenia planned to upgrade the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant not on loans from Russia, but on its own budget resources.

4 “Armenia encouraging migrants following Beirut blast”, *EurasiaNet*, September 3, 2020, <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-encouraging-migrants-following-beirut-blast>

5 “PKK’s Involvement in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict would Jeopardise European Security”, *EU Political Report*, September 23, 2020, <https://www.eupoliticalreport.eu/pkks-involvement-in-the-armenia-azerbaijan-conflict-would-jeopardise-european-security/>

The Armenian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures and Russia's Ministry of Transportation signed on 2 September a protocol for the development of South Caucasian Railway, extending to Iran.

Following the lifting of the state of emergency on 11 September on COVID-19 pandemic that had been declared six months ago, the government initiated a new legislative package, giving the executive the power to impose quarantine, which the government put into effect immediately and introduced a 4-month quarantine until 11 January. The Ministry of Health informed the public that 10% of overall public spending on health care of the 2020 budget was spent on COVID-19 since March.

The Prosecutor General's Office set up on 4 September a special division tasked with enforcing a controversial law allowing the confiscation of private properties and other assets deemed to have been acquired illegally in line with Pashinyan's repeated call that "wealth stolen from the people" must be recovered.

The Armenian parliament elected on 15 September three new members to the Constitutional Court to replace the three, including the president of the court, ousted in June. The controversially ousted three judges refused to step down, claiming that their removal was illegal and politically motivated. They appealed to the European Court of Human Rights to be reinstated.

On 21 September, the third Republic of Armenia celebrated its 29th anniversary of independence. Unlike Georgia and Azerbaijan, which identify themselves with their second independent republic, Armenia takes into account also the Soviet time republic and raises the number to three.

The Director of Armenia's National Security Service was relieved of his duties by the Prime Minister after only four months in office.

On 22 September, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun and two other opposition parties announced that they would hold a joint anti-government rally on 8 October. They accused the government of failing everywhere and endangering the country's development prospects. They claimed the need for the formation of a new kind of national government. The rally did not take place as war started on 27 September, but the opposition hit back with vengeance after the defeat and the signing of 10 November agreement.

Protesters, with ARF-Dashnaktsutyun in the fore, started a night of riots in Yerevan over the outcome of the 2020 Karabakh War against Azerbaijan, stormed the government headquarters, ransacked the premises of the Prime Minister and the parliament, attacked the Speaker of the Parliament who was beaten in front of his wife and child to the point of being hospitalized. The

mob chanted for the resignation of the Prime Minister, which was shortly after taken up by the opposition parties and even by the President himself. A rally organized by 17 parliamentary and extra-parliamentary political parties demanded his resignation.

The ARF-Dashnaksutyun was the first to issue a formal statement to demand that the Prime Minister resigned “amicably”. It was followed by others. The ‘My Step’ party of Pashinyan came up with a defensive statement, claiming that, “the current analysis of hostilities shows that the Armenian people have fought together not only against Azerbaijan, but also against one of the world’s largest armed forces, state-of-the-art weapons, an army with unlimited human resources, mercenary terrorists and special forces recruited from different countries”. The party further challenged the opposition stating, before discussing the legitimacy of the agreement on the end of the Karabakh war,

“We suggest that the opposition state very clearly to all Armenians and the world that they:

1. Support the cancellation of the Russian mediation;
2. Support the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from the line of contact;
3. They are in favor of continuing the war.

After making this statement, the opposition forces are also obliged to present the proposed roadmap for victory in the resumed war.”⁶

Diaspora Armenians, again with the lead of ARF-Dashnaksutyun came up with the following statement published in an Armenian American Daily, *Asbarez*:

“Armenian Revolutionary Federation

The statement signed by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan on November 10, 2020 to end the war is nothing but a defeatist and humiliating document, which is not only a great crime against the interests, desires and goals of the homeland and the entire Armenian nation, but also it unequivocally endangers and violates the absolute right of the future generations of the Armenian people to live in an independent, secure and developing country and to build a dignified future.

6 “Armenia: My Step Parliamentary Faction Challenges Opposition to Present ‘Victory Roadmap’”, *Hetq*, November 12, 2020, <https://hetq.am/en/article/124212>

This reprehensible and unacceptable document on the complete surrender (capitulation) of Armenia and Artsakh has infuriated and angered the Armenian people, whose just demand, in order to salvage the situation, is for Nikol Pashinyan leave without incident.

In the wake of the popular uprising, the ruling regime has begun arresting opposition party leaders and other public figures in order to evade responsibility, extend its rule and silence the people by force. We strongly condemn the illegal arrests and stress that with such actions it is impossible to curb a just wave of popular protest and anger.

At the same time, we consider the resignation of Prime Minister Pashinyan vital for the implementation of the steps envisioned by the trilateral statement and the negotiations on the next stages of the settlement of the Artsakh conflict in general, in order to create an opportunity to defend the interests of the republics of Armenia and Artsakh and the Armenian people in a worthy manner.

The Prime Minister's resignation will signal that he places national interests above his personal political ambitions. If the Prime Minister really signed the tripartite statement in order to save the remnants of the Homeland, by the same logic he should resign, to allow political forces to unify our national potential and emerge from this situation. We caution the Prime Minister not to destabilize the country with his violence, persecution and provocations. We call on our people to be vigilant and not to give in to provocations.

At the very least, the Prime Minister, himself, knows full well the ARF's unconditional and unwavering devotion to the homeland. From the first moments of the war we expressed to the Prime Minister, personally, our willingness to put aside all our differences and the ARF's readiness to enlist, with its entire structure, in the Armenian Army. In the days that followed that willingness and responsibility was proven on the battlefield and on the sidelines on internal and external fronts. We conveyed this to the Prime Minister on several occasions during the entire duration of the war.

Finally, we call on our youth around the world to not to despair, not to be disappointed and not to be discouraged. Our commitment to defend our national interests is unwavering. Through our unrelenting struggle, albeit sometimes unsuccessful, we will finally achieve our national aspirations.”⁷

7 “ARF Bureau Statement Addresses Trilateral Agreement”, *Armenian Weekly*, November 12, 2020, <https://armenianweekly.com/2020/11/12/arf-bureau-statement-addresses-trilateral-agreement/>

ARF-Dashnaktsutyun Western US Central Committee added the following:

“The ARF fully and unequivocally rejects this perilous and defeatist document the Prime Minister is trying to force upon the Armenian Nation, under the guise of a peaceful resolution to the war in Artsakh. This so called peace agreement that gives away one third of the former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, displacing thousands of Artsakh’s citizenry; which gives up control over Lachin to the Azeri military, ensuring a chokehold on the lifeline of the people of Artsakh; which demands the removal of all Armenian military forces from Artsakh, placing the security of our people at the mercy of an Azerbaijani government which has repeatedly expressed its desire to ethnically cleanse them; which gives away lands secured by blood in Hadrut and Kelbajar; and finally which requires Armenia to give up land to build a route over Syunik to connect Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan, giving Turkey direct access over Armenian lands. This last condition can and will endanger Armenian’s viability by cutting off its direct access to Iran and ultimately will serve Erdogans’s Pan-Turkism dream. There isn’t a single redeeming factor within this agreement that is beneficial or favorable to Armenia and Artsakh.

We condemn this agreement and the irresponsible actions of PM Nikol Pashinyan. As the leader of the Republic of Armenia, he had the sacred duty to safeguard the interests of our Nation. As someone who preached democratic values and social justice during the Velvet Revolution, he had to be transparent and honest with the people. Instead, he engaged in deception and concealed the truth about the war and its outcome. A surrender of this magnitude and consequence proves the government’s inability to deal with the national interest of Artsakh. The Prime Minister incompetently handled the national defense and then shamefully blamed others. He must be held accountable.”

Pashinyan addressed the nation on 12 November, defending his decision by repeating that Armenia signed the document to put an end to a bloody six-week war after a series of defeats in the battlefield. He sought to reaffirm his control of the situation, stressing that restoration of an atmosphere of stability and security is a priority for his government.

In his address to the parliament on 16 November, Prime Minister Pashinyan pledged to reshuffle his cabinet. The Foreign Minister was the first to be sacked. This was no surprise. He was the front man to counsel the Prime Minister that the West would come to help. He was also the protagonist to deepen anti-Turkish rhetoric to entice third parties. Earlier, he had leaked to the press that he was unaware of the planned signing of the agreement and the

very sensitive issue of retreat from the town of Shusha, cause of mass protests, was beyond his knowledge, dealt solely by Pashinyan, was a relevant revelation of his character. A career diplomat, former deputy minister Ara Ayyvazian was appointed as Armenia's new Foreign Minister.

Minister for Emergency Situations stepped down amid continuing opposition calls for the government's resignation. An active duty general, Andranik Piloyan was appointed in his place. Minister of Defense, another minister who had misled the Prime Minister also resigned. Minister of Labor and Social Affairs was replaced by Mesrop Arekelyan, an advisor to the Prime Minister.

The fifth member of the Armenian government to resign was the Minister of Education, a close associate of Pashinyan and founding member of his party. His resignation was long demanded by the ARF as well as the Church which he resisted resolutely. It is possible to assume that he was sacrificed for political convenience. He was replaced by Vahram Dumanian, an academic at the Yerevan State University.

The sixth minister to be replaced was the Minister of Economy. He was replaced by Vahan Kerobian, a businessman.

A thorn on the side of the Prime Minister emerged to be President A. Sarkisian. After Pashinyan's announcement of the 10 November agreement and fierce reaction of the opposition became evident, the President went public, stating that he was not consulted on the end of war agreement, that he learned from the press about the circumstances as if he was not promoting the war effort all along and as if he did not hold the top office to be able to be informed of all. He then called for consultations and talked with opposition representatives, following which he said, "The government that led to the tragedy must go", again, as if he was not part of that tragedy. This was another case of revelation of character. He reiterated calls for the resignation of the government and to hold snap elections. On 26 November, in an interview with *Armenian Public Television*, he again insisted that this was a necessary condition for addressing a "deep crisis" in Armenia. The embattled Prime Minister retorted that the opposition's drive to force him to step down is not backed by most Armenians. His allies argued that only a few thousand people attended the rallies. The President responding to that argument said, "I believe we have a really deep crisis and a simple analysis will help us understand why there are no 100,000 or 200,000 people in the streets".

The President apparently wants to have a stronger influence on government policies and political process. He complained that:

“I am able to use only 5 or 10 percent of my potential for my country due to constitutional constraints or my partners not being open to cooperation ... I believe I can do much more in international relations and the investment-related, cultural and diplomatic areas but am doing very little.”⁸

He went on to reveal that he has drawn up a policy “roadmap” for the would-be interim government. He said it contains a set of urgent government actions which he believes are vital for Armenia in the current circumstances. “These are concrete tasks for concrete spheres,” he added without elaborating.

2. Occupied Azerbaijani territories of Nagorno Karabakh and adjacent provinces

The fighting at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in the Tovuz region on 12-14 July proved to be the precursor of what was to come in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Following the attack in Tovuz, Turkey, Ukraine, Pakistan, and Moldova issued statements supporting Azerbaijan. The Secretary General of the Turkish Council also condemned the Armenian attacks and supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan against the occupation of Armenia. There were no statements of support to Armenia except from the Greek Administration of South Cyprus (GASC). The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) also managed not to get involved. Commenting on the fighting, Foreign Minister of Russia blamed “a whole lot of reasons”, primarily the “unresolved” Nagorno Karabakh conflict for the resumption of tensions.

Addressing the Moscow State Foreign Relations Institute on 1 September, Foreign Minister of Russia made groundbreaking remarks for the solution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict. He pointed out the set of documents developed over almost 18 years, called “Madrid Principles”, the “Kazan Document” and also updated versions of documents that were approved by the parties as a basis for further work, envisaging a step by step approach. He also warned that suggestions to abandon these documents and start from scratch or even launch some kind of “B Plan” -an obvious reference to Armenian efforts to hinder progress and solution- would be a big mistake.

Armenia was not deterred. Armenian Foreign Minister went public, reiterating maximalist approaches and rejecting any deviation from those demands as being unilateral concessions. He declared that for Armenia, there were concrete and key priorities: the issue of the status of Nagorno Karabakh, the realization of the right of self-determination without any restrictions, and the provision of

8 “President Sarkissian Reiterates Call for Snap Elections”, *Asbarez*, November 27, 2020, <https://asbarez.com/198795/president-sarkissian-reiterates-call-for-snap-elections/>.

security. He rejected a step-by-step approach and proposed a package deal. He also called again for the change of the format of negotiations to include the illegal Armenian administration of Karabakh. He also denied the existence of any document on the peace negotiating table.

It was evident that the adamant position of Armenia was fostering even more aggression. The Minister of Defense, in tandem with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was now talking of not occupied but “liberated” lands and “more war for more land”. The illegal Armenian administration of Nagorno-Karabakh announced another provocative decision on 19 September that its seat of “parliament” would be relocated from the capital city of Hankendi to the historical Azerbaijani town of Shusha. In such an atmosphere, the mediators in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs issued a statement urging the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia to meet with them in the coming weeks.

The statement said:

“The Co-Chairs held intensive consultations in Paris on September 14... They discussed the situation in the region, paying special attention to new events that took place after the escalation of violence on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in mid-July. They discussed in detail and assessed the private and public messages and concerns of the parties. They briefed the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on the security situation on the ground and welcomed the concrete preparations for the resumption of monitoring activities. They had a separate telephone conversation with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan to urge the Ministers to meet with the Co-Chairs in the coming week to further clarify their positions and to resume serious substantive talks without preconditions.”⁹

This statement proved to be the last one to reveal how detached the co-chairs were from the realities and how they continued to ignore the grievance of the party whose territories were occupied, yet the perpetrator was nevertheless treated with impunity.

Fighting started in the occupied territories on 27 September, developing into full-fledged war to last for 44 days. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia issued a public statement the same day stating the following:

9 “Armenia/Azerbaijan – Press Statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Paris, 14 Sept. 2020)”, *France Diplomacy*, September 14, 2020, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/armenia/news/article/armenia-azerbaijan-press-statement-by-the-co-chairs-of-the-osce-minsk-group>

“Early this morning, the Azerbaijani side launched missile attacks along the entire line of contact targeting also the peaceful settlements, including the capital Stepanakert [Hankendi for Azerbaijan]. We strongly condemn the aggression of the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh (the illegal administration in Nagorno Karabakh) and to deliver appropriate military and political response. The military-political leadership of Azerbaijan bears full responsibility for the consequences of their aggression.”¹⁰

The accusations of who started the war was, understandably, mutual.

Armenia appeared to be confident that it would receive international support and assistance to achieve success. To this end, propaganda warfare was given as much importance as military efforts. Prime Minister Pashinyan made the following address on 27 September:

“Dear people, proud citizens of the Republic of Armenia, proud citizens of the Republic of Artsakh, proud Armenians of the Diaspora, the adversary has launched an attack in the direction of Artsakh. The defense army is successfully withstanding the attack. The situation is rapidly developing. Information will be reported according to necessity”.

Later on, he announced the declaration of martial law and general military mobilization. The support from the Diaspora was not late in coming, not surprisingly, from the notorious ARF-Dashnaktsutyun of western United States, with an action alert for its members to contact their senators and members of the House of Representatives.

The Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in an interview with an international TV news channel the same day, clamorously said the following:

“What happened this morning is a testament to Azerbaijan’s intentions to aggressively advance its fanatical stance against the security of our people. We consistently claim that the basis of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is the security of our people and today it was proved once again that we must ensure the security of our compatriots, the people of Nagorno Karabakh who are determined to counter this aggression to protect their security and freedom. And this aggression was not only deliberate by Azerbaijan but is accompanied by large scale support from Turkey, which has a military presence in Azerbaijan, its aggressive

10 “Early this morning, the Azerbaijani side launched missile attacks along the entire line of contact targeting also the peaceful settlements”, *Government Representation of Armenia Before the European Court of Human Rights*, September 27, 2020, <https://www.echr.am/en/events/azerbaijan-attack-on-peaceful-settlements.html>

stance towards Armenia. This is extremely worrying, this is a large scale escalation”.

On his part the President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev, in a televised address to the nation said: “Today the Azerbaijani army is protecting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan on its own territory. Armenia is an occupying state and we must and will put an end to that occupation”.

The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement also the same day and called on the parties to immediately cease fire. US Secretary of State urged on 29 September Armenia and Azerbaijan to cease hostilities. Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church (the Vatican) urged people to pray for peace in the Caucasus region. Iran’s president added his voice to international calls for an end to hostilities. The United Nations Security Council, after a closed-door session, also called for an immediate end to hostilities. French President Emmanuel Macron showed himself to be the aggressive voice on behalf of Armenia. During a press conference in Latvia, voicing support to the Armenian people, he said, “I say to Armenia and to the Armenians: France will play its role”.

Religion was also instrumentalized to support Armenia. The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America issued an appeal on 1 October to “sister churches across the country and the World to gain support for Armenia and Artsakh”. Archbishop Anoushavan, prelate of the Church’s eastern United States division, issued the following statement:

“NCC Calls for an Immediate End to the Armenia/Azerbaijan Conflict

The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) laments the increased hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the loss of life in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. As the fighting escalates, NCC opposes this unprovoked surprise attack by Azerbaijan that has brought Armenia into a state of war.

The NCC stands in solidarity with the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, the World Council of Churches, and people of goodwill everywhere in expressing our outrage and deep sadness at this conflict.

We deplore the use of military force by Azerbaijan and the Syrian rebel fighters that are funded and sent by Turkey to assist their assault on the Armenian community. The use of armor, aviation, heavy artillery, and drones suggests a planned operation. It is time that Turkey ends their involvement in the region by stopping their participation in the fight and their encouragement of the war.

We recognize that the fighters from Syria have been displaced from their homes and are desperate to feed their families which may have caused them to be recruited into this destructive conflict.

NCC calls on the United States to undertake diplomatic measures to halt the fighting. We hope and pray that the U.S. Department of State will not be indifferent to this situation. We ask our member churches to immediately convey this message to their elected officials.

We pray according to the Armenian tradition: “Listen to the cry that rises from every corner of this fragile earth, from our human family torn by violent conflict. It is to You we pray, O loving Lord —today, in the days to come, and always—for the repose of the departed, for the healing of the spiritual and moral afflictions tormenting [us], and for an end to the violence that can only lead to ruin and destruction. [Amen.]” (Armenian Church of America).

September 30, 2020”¹¹

Aram I, Armenian Catholicos of Cilicia (Antelias/Lebanon) called Pashinyan to express his full support to the armed forces of Armenia. He said: “When the homeland is in danger, the entire Armenian nation becomes the Armenian army”. On 13 October, he published the following statement, the spiritual content of which is left to the reader to qualify:

“With the immediate sponsorship of Turkey, and with the participation of terrorists and mercenaries, the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh has put us before a new reality, with its military, political, legal and geopolitical aspects and consequences. Therefore, the present reality must push Artsakh and Armenia, as well as the international community, towards thinking and working in one direction: the recognition of the Republic of Artsakh. There is no alternative.

Anyone who has followed closely the latest developments of the Azerbaijan-Artsakh war, will see:

1. Azerbaijan enjoys the unreserved and total political and military alliance of Turkey and the specialized support of Israel.
2. The current war is not purely local; it has the potential to have major regional and international consequences.

11 “Eastern Diocese Appeals to Sister Churches to Condemn Attack on Artsakh”, *Armenian Life*, October 5, 2020, <http://www.armenianlife.com/2020/10/05/eastern-diocese-appeals-to-sister-churches-to-condemn-attack-on-artsakh/>

3. Giving a new appearance and emphasis to its pan-Turanic and expansionist policy, along with its attempt to expand its influence from the Middle East and the Islamic world to the countries of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, Turkey is trying to do the same in the Caucasus, using Azerbaijan for it.

The existing consensus between Russia, Turkey, and Iran in regards to Syria obviously push Russia and Iran to adopt a measured and cautious attitude towards the war incited by Turkey and carried out by Azerbaijan. Their cautious approach, however, cannot last long in the face of this urgent situation, full of serious dangers and grave consequences, when especially the geopolitical interests of Russia in the region begin to be compromised.

Azerbaijan has always tried to reoccupy Artsakh militarily, opposing the international decisions for a political and negotiated solution for the Artsakh dispute. This new attempt by Azerbaijan, which was boosted by the pan-Turanic efforts, pursues these new goals.

The Armenian army continues to defend heroically Artsakh, our right and our dignity. We have shed blood, we have sustained terrible destruction and damages, we have faced enormous problems, but we continue to resist. Indeed, to face the Azerbaijani attacks, fueled by Turkey's support and Israeli weapons, is a victory in itself. Alongside the army and Armenia and Artsakh's diplomatic offensive, the widespread outreach effort, the organized protests and the demonstrations in support of Armenia throughout the Diaspora have mobilized our entire people.

The situation remains extremely complicated and fragile.

For thirty years, we have told the world that Artsakh is ours, we asserted our self-determination right at the price of blood and we directed our statements, our thoughts and our work towards the international recognition of the Republic of Artsakh.

In those years we also demonstrated wise caution, allowing political negotiations. The present war, however, came to show once again that Azerbaijan does not believe in negotiations and, enjoying the full support of Turkey, will not leave us in peace, it will make use of an attrition war and, moreover, it will be taken advantage of by Turkey to achieve bigger, future objectives.

We cannot sacrifice people every few years as well as sustain horrible material and economic damages. It is vital for us to define our strategic

and defense policies, both in the short and the long terms, always with a realistic spirit and in accordance with the present geopolitical facts and circumstances.

First, it is fundamental to establish a ceasefire, at any price and immediately, and resume political negotiations.

Second, carry out methodical work for the international recognition of Artsakh. We cannot wait any longer. This goes against us, in every sense. We know that such a measure will bring with it new complications and that the international community may not be ready for it at this point. Nevertheless, there is no other alternative. What can be worse than the current war, when Azerbaijan even ignores the principles of international law that apply to wars and ceasefires?

Third, the role of Russia is key for the solution of any issue related to Artsakh. The slow and cautious reaction by Russia may invite different interpretations. Nevertheless, whatever the strategic approaches and calculations of Russia may be at the moment, Russia will never allow the presence of another power next to it in the Caucasus. With this conviction in mind, our cooperation with Russia must be based on mutual trust and common interests.

Fourth, the vitally, politically and legally important initiative of ensuring Artsakh requires a lot of preparation, a lot of outreach and diplomatic activity, and consistent work, which we must begin immediately. International law contemplates different ways, circumstances and requirements for recognition. We must study comprehensively and in detail all the issues and concrete circumstances for recognition.

We find ourselves before an existential crossroads in our history. Military success is the key, and the pro-Armenian sentiment of the international community is the driving force of our success. We need to be wise and cautious and always united.

We therefore urge the honorable Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, to invite, right after the consolidation of the ceasefire, the heads of the political parties in Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora, the spiritual leaders, as well as the highest officials of Armenia and Artsakh, to discuss the present situation and the following steps. On the one hand, such a meeting will show to foreigners our united and firm stance and, on the other, it will offer the opportunity for the exchange of viewpoints and approaches. We also propose that, following such a meeting, a committee of experts be formed under the leadership of the Prime

Minister to steer the recognition work in its legal, diplomatic, political and communicational dimensions.

Catholicos Aram I”.¹²

On October 25, he issued a further call to arms to Armenians all over the World. Full text of the article on his call is here below:

“On Sunday, October 25, His Holiness Catholicos Aram I issued a call to arms to Armenians all over the world. In his message, His Holiness spoke about the sacrifices of the armies of Artsakh and Armenia as they fight against the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression.

1. “The Armenian army continues to defend heroically the free and independent Republic of Artsakh and, by way of Artsakh, the security of Armenia and, by way of Armenia, the firm existence of the entire Armenian nation. This is how the Artsakh war must be seen. Therefore, this is not a conventional war: it is a war that will determine the fate of the Armenian nation and homeland.” He added that fighting for the homeland is not only a duty, but an honor and a reason for pride.

2. Turkey stands next to Azerbaijan in this war, the Catholicos said. Turkey, he said, is trying to expand its presence from the Mediterranean to Eastern Europe through a newly reformulated pan-Turkic project. “This is why the Artsakh war must be contemplated with a broader view beyond Artsakh, within the framework of the long-term objectives that drive Turkey.” Unfortunately, he added, “the Armenian people pay the price of all this.”

3. “Where is the world, and in particular the West, in view of Turkey’s racist, genocidal, imperialist and pan-Turkic policy?”, wondered His Holiness. “Indeed, when we talk about the Genocide of 1915, we often wonder where the West was when a nation was subjected to extermination plan of Ottoman Turkey.” One hundred and five years later, we wonder again “where is the international community, when the same author of the Genocide, pursuing a new genocide, roams freely far from its immediate borders?”

Catholicos Aram I added that it was “clear that enormous states are in practice participating in different manners in the war unleashed against our small nation.” He went on to quote the father of Armenian history, Movses of Khoren,

12 “Catholicos Aram I: Artsakh Must Be Recognized”, *Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church*, October 13, 2020.

recalling the “heroism” of the Armenian soldiers in Nagorno-Karabakh, consciously sacrificing their lives to protect “the Armenian homeland”:

“The people of Artsakh has asserted its self-determination right with independent statehood,” he said. “The self-determination of a people is one of the fundamental principles of international law.” There can be no retreat from that, His Holiness said.

“Therefore, from the Mother Monastery of Antelias we issue a call to arms in which every Armenian must take part, bringing their contribution in different manners to the sublime war for the independence and security of Artsakh,” he said.

In this regard, he urged Armenia to coalesce around it all organizations from Armenia and the Diaspora to overcome the existential danger posed by this war to Artsakh and Armenia.

The Diaspora, His Holiness said, has an important role in the call to arms, contributing its potential in terms of networking, outreach, recruitment and material support. It must also help towards the recognition of the Artsakh Republic by the international community.

He concluded his message by calling on Armenians to “think, plan and act in defense of the independence of Artsakh, a thriving Armenia and the eternity of our nation.”

Karekin II, the Armenian Catholicos of Etchmiadzin also addressed the nation on 14 October:

“We are living decisive days for our motherland. We are fighting to the death for the right of our people in Artsakh to a free and independent life. Azerbaijan, ignoring the ceasefire agreement, continues military operations against Artsakh, bombing also civilian settlements and civilian population, our monuments and sanctuaries, Cathedral of Sush. Bordering communities of the Republic of Armenia have also been targeted.”

The National Council of Church in the USA (NCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) condemned the escalation of violence and called on the international community to take diplomatic action. Christian Solidarity International (CSI), an NGO based in Switzerland, condemned on 2 October “the joint Turkish-Azerbaijani attack on Nagorno Karabakh” alleging “a renewed attempt to destroy one of the world’s oldest Christian communities”.

Pope Francis sent a handwritten letter to the Primate of the Armenian Church in Argentina on 11 October, made public on October 14, which reads as follows:

“The Artsakh conflict worries and hurts me. On the same Sunday fighting started, I was with our brother Karekin II, who was staying in this house. We talked about it, we prayed together; then he left for Yerevan and I, from the balcony of the Angelus, called for peace in the Caucasus region. Later, through the Secretary of State, and his collaborators, work began through diplomatic channels. Dear brother, I know the pain of the Armenian people and I am at your side; I pray for you and I do my best to help avoid a disaster”.

On the occasion of the visit of Catholicos Karekin II to the Vatican, an interview was published in the Italian daily *La Repubblica* on 19 October, where he said the escalating violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh region had the potential to become “another genocide” of the Armenian people. He added:

“What else is it if not genocide to indiscriminately bomb civilians, churches, the historical monuments of a people in spite of all international laws... Only by recognizing the disputed territory’s self-proclaimed independence can a possible new holocaust be avoided”.

Following the defeat of Armenia, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem addressed a letter to the President of Russia on 20 November, stressing the importance of protecting holy shrines in what he called “Artsakh”, pleading for his consideration due to “brotherly relationship between the Russian Orthodox and the Armenian Apostolic Churches”.

The WCC expressed its anger with the following statement on 13 November:

“The executive committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting by video conference on 9-13 November 2020, is gathered at a pivotal and acutely painful moment for the people of the land of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh and for all Armenian people, following the announcement of an agreement between the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia to bring an end to six weeks of intense armed conflict. We make an appeal for an end to the bloodshed and destruction this conflict has brought.

We join with His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, in praying for wisdom, unity and calm. We grieve with all those who have suffered terrible losses not only in the renewed fighting since 27 September, but throughout the long history of the

struggle for self-determination in the region, entrenching antagonism more deeply with each precious life lost.

We stand in solidarity with the Armenian communities that are threatened by the renewal of the genocide against their people, particularly in light of the egregious comments made by Turkish President Erdogan vowing to “fulfil this mission, which our grandfathers have carried out for centuries, in the Caucasus region” and in light of Turkey’s role in the current conflict. The WCC condemns any such threats, explicit or implicit, and the actions of those who have insinuated themselves in the conflict and exacerbated its violence, including by supplying internationally-banned weapons, sending mercenaries and jihadists from Syria and elsewhere, and seeking to turn it into a religious conflict. The WCC condemns the use of chemical weapons and cluster munitions, the targeting of civilians, hospitals and public infrastructure, and all other war crimes, beheadings, torture and other atrocities witnessed in the past weeks.

Furthermore, we appeal for respect for the holy sites and cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, though the repeated shelling of the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi on 8 October and the numerous reports being received of other more recent desecrations indicate a different reality. We urge UNESCO to take all possible and appropriate measures to protect these sites.

We call urgently upon all members of the international community to join in supporting efforts for the protection of such holy sites, for the return in safety and dignity of all refugees and displaced people, for protection of the Armenian people from the threat of genocide, for a lasting peace founded on justice and human rights for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh and the wider region, and to refrain from instigating or encouraging antagonism, conflict and injustice.

We lift up and accompany the continuing ministry and witness of the churches of the region, and pray that the church leaders may be given strength and wisdom to guide their people through this crisis.”

Catholicos Aram I of Antelias was more aggressive in his call to Armenians for unity. He said:

“Now it’s a crucial moment in the contemporary history of our homeland and people. Our courageous army heroically resisted the Turkish-Azerbaijani-terrorist army. Respect and honor to all our fallen heroes. The war is not over, we need to be vigilant and realistic. Armenia and

Artsakh are under danger with their peoples and statehood, present and especially future”.

On 4 October, Armenian President addressed the Diaspora, saying that a powerful and strong Diaspora is a genuine army, who support the homeland and the Armenian army. He did not feel shame from pronouncing these hateful provocative words:

“Please keep vibrant the same spirit and the same dedication because this time not only Azerbaijan but the genocidal Turkey too-with its arms, servicemen and mercenary terrorists are against us, against the freedom loving people of Artsakh”.

In a joint statement on 5 October, Foreign Ministers of the OSCE Minsk Group’s three co-chair countries strongly condemned the unprecedented and dangerous escalation of violence outside the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. Referring to the 1 October statement of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, the ministers reiterated their call on the parties to the conflict to immediately and unconditionally establish a cease fire.

The position of the European Union was put forth by the High Representative in his address to the European Parliament on 7 October. Here are some excerpts:

“On the day that fighting erupted, I released a statement as High Representative, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities, de-escalation and strict observance of the ceasefire. At this stage, further escalation of the conflict and involvement of regional actors, unhappily, cannot be excluded. The fighting should stop. The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs are going to have meetings this week with the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the two countries and the only way to get out of this situation is that Minsk Group co-chairs push for immediate negotiations as soon as possible. All of you have been asking to act. What do you mean by act? We will do whatever we can do in order to support the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. If you mean by ‘act’ taking military action-is completely out of question. We are going to do what we can do as the European Union, with the resources we have in the diplomatic arena. The European Council has decided to see what is going on from now until December to review our relationship with Turkey”.

Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed on a truce on 9 October in order to exchange prisoners of war and bodies of killed soldiers. The agreement was reached after ten hours of negotiations in Moscow between the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia. These were the first diplomatic talks between

the two sides since fighting broke out on 27 September. The signed protocol is as follows:

“In response to the appeal of the President of the Russian Federation Putin and in accordance with the agreements of the President of the Russian Federation Putin, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan I. Aliyev and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia N. Pashinyan, the parties agreed on the following steps:

1. A ceasefire is declared from 12:00 pm on October 10, 2020 for humanitarian purposes for the exchange of prisoners of war and other detained persons and bodies of the dead, mediated and in accordance with the criteria of the International Committee of the Red Cross.
2. The specific parameters of the ceasefire regime will be agreed upon additionally.
3. The Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, with the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, on the basis of the basic principles of the settlement, are starting substantive negotiations with the aim of achieving a peaceful settlement as soon as possible.
4. The parties confirm the invariability of the format of the negotiation process”.¹³

The Minsk Group co-chairs called on Azerbaijan and Armenia to take immediate steps to fully implement their commitments made in Moscow on 10 October to prevent catastrophic consequences in the region in a statement they issued on 14 October. Russian Foreign Minister offered on 13 October to deploy military observers to monitor the cease fire as part of a verification mechanism.

Prime Minister Pashinyan, under the delusion that Minsk Group co-chair countries would come to his assistance to maintain the status quo of occupation made the following address to the nation on 14 October, following the truce agreed in Moscow:

“Dear people,

Proud citizens of the Republic of Armenia, proud citizens of the Artsakh Republic, proud Armenians of the Diaspora.

13 “Azerbaijan, Armenia agree on ceasefire for humanitarian purposes”, *Trend News Agency*, October 10, 2020, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3314122.html>

The terrorist war unleashed by Turkey and Azerbaijan against Artsakh has been going on for 18 days already. Before referring to the situation on the battlefield, I consider it necessary to emphasize that today it is very important for us to understand the military-political situation, but for this we must first understand the causes and conditions of this war.

In the negotiation process on the Karabakh issue, Azerbaijan step by step reached a point where, in fact, it demanded from the Armenian people, the Armenians of Karabakh, to renounce their rights.

The essence of that demand was the following. Immediately hand over 5 out of 7 territories to Azerbaijan, present a concrete timetable for handing over the remaining 2 territories and state that any status of Nagorno Karabakh must be part of Azerbaijan. Moreover, the clarification of the status of Nagorno Karabakh should not have anything to do with the process of handing over the territories. In other words, territories should be handed over not for status but for peace, otherwise Azerbaijan threatened to resolve the issue through war.

Our government, which had inherited this negotiating base, or rather the negotiating ground, in fact refused to discuss the issue in that way because it was unacceptable.

In these circumstances, when we tried to state clearly that the settlement of the issue without defining the status of Artsakh is impossible, Azerbaijan rejected any serious discussion on the status, in fact saying that the only status that Artsakh can have is something autonomous within Azerbaijan, and, in fact, laid the foundation for the structures by which Karabakh was to be emptied of Armenians altogether.

At the same time, Azerbaijan was developing military rhetoric and anti-Armenian propaganda.

During the last two and a half years, we have carried out reforms and rearmament in our army, trying to create real conditions for the premise “there is no military solution to the Karabakh issue.”

The victorious battles of Tavush in July 2020 proved the unexpected for many. The Azerbaijani army is unable to resolve the Karabakh issue by military means. This protocol was shocking not only for Azerbaijan, but also for many other countries, especially Turkey.

Immediately after the July battles, an unprecedented Turkish-Azerbaijani military exercise began, a large number of Turkish troops and military equipment were transferred to Azerbaijan. During the exercise, they

reaffirmed that the Azerbaijani army is incapable of solving specific problems in the near future, and Turkey decided that it should no longer deal with the Karabakh issue.

Something unprecedented happened, Turkey openly and publicly started threatening Armenia, simultaneously transferring a large number of terrorists and mercenaries from Syria to the Karabakh conflict zone, realizing that the forces of the Azerbaijani army alone would not be enough to solve their problem.

In this situation, we tried to use strategic containment mechanisms with the simple calculation that if Turkey achieves its goals in the South Caucasus, it will inevitably lead to a chain reaction of events, and therefore to the regional and extra-regional countries that will inevitably become the object of that destabilization.

At this stage, however, a strange circumstance was recorded. A number of countries with the potential for strategic containment did not properly assess the threat, continuing to view the issue in the context of the Karabakh conflict and, in essence, believing that territories are the formula for peace that can save the situation.

This, of course, being unacceptable to us, is very similar to the 1938 Munich Agreement, when a number of European powers allegedly ceded Czechoslovakia to Germany for the sake of peace. And you all know what happened next. And now the question is whether the world will allow the formation of a new Hitler, this time in Asia Minor.

The war against Artsakh started unexpectedly for us. We knew we were waiting, the question was at what time and from where the enemy would attack.

The Artsakh Defense Army is really fighting a heroic battle from the first seconds. The alliance of Turkish-Azerbaijani mercenaries launched the strongest attack on Artsakh: tanks, armored vehicles, missiles, artillery, military aircraft, helicopters, various drones, a huge number of people, including several thousand special forces from Turkey and, according to some information, as well as mercenaries and terrorists from Syria.

The enemy did not have any strategic or territorial success during the first week, and this was in the conditions when it had no restrictions on supply and manpower, and Artsakh and Armenia were operating in the conditions of blockade. During this time, the enemy lost a huge amount of military equipment, was inflicted a large number of casualties, but

some of those casualties were mercenary terrorists, which was not difficult at all in Azerbaijan.

[On the contrary,] every drop of our blood [hurts] all of us, not to mention the enormous number of victims we already have at the moment. The statement issued in Moscow last Friday was aimed at preventing further losses - our participation in the process, which provided for a humanitarian ceasefire, full exchange of bodies, prisoners and detainees, return to the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing format with the logic of resolving the issue as soon as possible.

However, Azerbaijan, in fact, did not adhere to the ceasefire agreement for a second and still continues to attack, at the same time hindering the formation of a ceasefire monitoring mechanism.

This means that Azerbaijan continues to adhere to its political line from the beginning and has set itself the task of full occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh.

At this point, however, we can record one thing. The initial Turkish-Azerbaijani terrorist plan to occupy Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories with a blitzkrieg failed, due to the joint work and efforts of local self-government and state bodies.

During this time, however, we have had many losses. At this moment, the number of our victims is very high, and I mourn for our brave martyrs who defended the homeland, the right of their own people to live, defended our identity, dignity and future with their lives. And I bow to all our victims, martyrs, their families, their parents and especially their mothers, and I consider their loss my loss, my personal loss, the loss of my family.

Dear people, proud citizens of the Republic of Armenia, proud citizens of the Artsakh Republic, proud Armenians of the Diaspora.

During the 18 days of the war, our heroic troops retreated to the north and south. In recent days, the enemy has changed its tactics, trying to start a mess in the rear with subversive groups. Nevertheless, the Artsakh Defense Army, with heavy fighting, losses of manpower and equipment, keeps the general situation under control, causing the enemy numerous losses of manpower and equipment.

But we all need to know that a very difficult situation has arisen. I do not make this record, however, out of desperation. I pass this information because I have an obligation to speak the language of truth to our people,

unlike Azerbaijan, which hides thousands of victims from its own people and, according to our estimates, the loss of more than \$ 1 billion in military equipment.

But the main purpose of my message today is to talk about what we have to do and our strategy, and to encourage our national unity around that.

Therefore, it is necessary to state that the Turkish-Azerbaijani terrorist alliance will not stop its attack on Artsakh and Armenia.

These days, the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing countries - Russia, France, the United States - have made and continue to work for a ceasefire. The statement of the presidents and foreign ministers of the three countries and the statement of Moscow on October 10 were adopted.

I would like to thank the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs for their efforts.

Thank you to the United States Administration for all the efforts that have been made so far.

I thank France President Emanuel Macron for his determination to name things from the very first days of the war and for his willingness to make further efforts.

Special thanks to the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, with whom we have maintained an intensive relationship during this time. These days, Russia has been able to fulfill its role of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair and Armenia's strategic ally at a high level, and I am convinced that this role will be unequivocally carried out in accordance with the best traditions of friendship between the Armenian and Russian peoples.

And we, adhering to the logic of a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, would like to emphasize that we will be highly constructive in making the diplomatic efforts effective.

However, these efforts have so far not been enough to curb the Turkish-Azerbaijani terrorist group, because the task that the group has set itself is not only to resolve the Karabakh issue, but also to continue the traditional Turkish genocidal policy towards our people.

But at this crucial moment we will not back down, because this is a crucial war for our people.

In this situation, the Armenian people have only one thing to do: unite, concentrate all their potential, stop the enemy with a decisive blow and achieve an irreversible victory, that is, the final settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the recognition of the right of the Nagorno Karabakh people to self-determination.

The souls, spirit and strength of our other great martyrs and heroes Artashes Arka, Tigran the Great, Ashot Yerkat, Aram Manukyan, Hovhannes Baghramyan, Monte Melkonyan, Vazgen Sargsyan are with us today.

Today, Armenians are more united than ever. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians these days provide financial, economic, media and political support to Armenia and Artsakh.

In hundreds of Diaspora communities these days, our compatriots are holding thousands of peaceful rallies of solidarity, protest and support, with two specific issues on the agenda: international recognition of Artsakh's independence, condemnation of Turkish-Azerbaijani terrorist aggression.

This is the culmination of our national unity, and this culmination must be crowned with the realization of our specific national goals.

It is impossible to break the Armenian people, it is impossible to intimidate the Armenian people, it is impossible to defeat the Armenian people. We will stand until the end, we will fight until the end, and the name of that end is Free and Happy Artsakh, Free and Happy Armenia.

Today, at this crucial moment, each and every one of us, must focus on achieving this goal. Artsakh, the army, the soldier, the front line. This is what should be the focus of our efforts in the Diaspora or in Armenia. We must turn our mourning into anger, our fears into determination, and our doubts into action.

We must win, we must live, we must build our history, and we are building our history, our new epic, our new heroic battle, our new Sardarapat."¹⁴

The 10 October cease-fire did not last long. On 14 October, Pashinyan was on record saying that only a change in Turkey's stance on Nagorno-Karabakh could prompt Azerbaijan to halt military action over the region.

14 "Armenia PM on Karabakh conflict: Our government refused to discuss the issue in this way", *News.am*, October 14, 2020, <https://news.am/eng/news/607851.html>

A second humanitarian truce was announced on 18 October. Pashinyan evaluated the situation on 19 October as follows:¹⁵

- “- What is this war for? The status of Karabakh.
- Could we have avoided the war? Yes, if we handed over the territories and agreed to the uncertain status of Karabakh, indefinitely in the absence of further status adjustment.
- Could we have reached Karabakh acceptable or any status through negotiations? No, because the last opportunity to do so was in 2011 in Kazan.
- Can we stop this war? Theoretically, yes, with a slightly worse formula than one mentioned in point two.
- Can war solve the status of Karabakh? Yes, if we succeed in war.
- Can we succeed in war? Yes, if we focus the national potential around that goal and sincerely and selflessly commit to that goal.”

The truce was broken again. In an interview he gave to a Russian news agency on 19 October, Pashinyan urged more Armenians to join their armed forces, claiming that Azerbaijan was rejecting any compromise solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and continuing the war in the conflict zone.

The US administration invited the Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia to Washington DC as part of its efforts to stop the war in and around Karabakh. The two ministers met separately with the US Secretary of State on 23 October. No fresh agreements were announced following those meetings. The Russian President expressed hope on this occasion that the US would assist Russia in its efforts to get the conflicting parties to respect the cease-fire brokered by Moscow on 10 October. The Democratic Party US Presidential candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden, in his fourth announcement on the war, called on 27 October on the US President Donald Trump “to get personally involved” to end the fighting.

The Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia met with the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs in Washington DC on 24 October, where they were having separate meetings with the US Secretary of State. The statement issued after the meeting repeated more of the same narrative. It was also announced that

15 “Pashinyan: We could have avoided the war only by ceding”, *PanArmenian*, October 19, 2020, https://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/286732/Pashinyan_We_could_have_avoided_the_war_only_by_ceding_territories

the co-chairs and the ministers agreed to meet again in Geneva on 29 October to discuss, reach agreement on and begin implementation, in accordance with a timeline to be agreed upon, of all steps necessary to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Azerbaijan's President said on 25 October that Baku was ready to halt hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh if Armenia accepts a framework peace accord put forward by the US, Russia, and France. A spokesperson for Prime Minister Pashinyan dismissed Azerbaijan President's statement. She said that the current Armenian Government has always expressed readiness to seek a compromise-based solution in contrast to Baku's "maximalist" stance.

On 30 October, Pashinyan told a British newspaper that Armenia supported the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in the Karabakh conflict zone if it will end the ongoing costly war. He also commented on that same issue in an interview he gave on 3 October to an international TV channel, but then felt the need to clarify himself for avoiding any future speculations. *ArmenPress* was authorized to present the correct transcript as follows: Question- "Would you want to see Russian peacekeepers for example in Nagorno Karabakh?" Reply- "You see those issues could be discussed in the context of the wider resolution, within the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship".

Invoking the August 1997 Treaty of "Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" with Russia, Pashinyan formally asked the Russian President on 31 October "to define types and amount of assistance" that Moscow could provide to Armenia, saying that the fighting with Azerbaijan that broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh last month was nearing the country's frontiers. A statement issued later by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia said that "under the treaty Russia will render all necessary assistance to Yerevan if military operations take place directly on the territory of Armenia".

The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group Released the following statement on 30 October:

"The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stephane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America) released the following statement today:

The Co-Chairs met separately and jointly with Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov in Geneva on October 30. The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office (PRCiO) Andrzej Kasprzyk also participated in the meetings. They also held consultations with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and ICRC President Peter Maurer.

The Co-Chairs once again called on the sides to implement, in full, their commitments, including the immediate establishment of a humanitarian ceasefire, in accordance with the October 10 Moscow Joint Statement, which the sides reaffirmed with Paris on October 17 and in Washington on October 25.

Without prejudice to the implementation of the ceasefire or other commitments, the sides agreed to take a number of steps on an urgent basis, including:

The sides will not deliberately target civilian populations or non-military objects in accordance with international humanitarian law;

The sides will actively engage in the implementation of the recovery and exchange of remains on the battlefield by providing the ICRC and PRCiO the necessary safety guarantees for facilitation;

The sides will deliver to the ICRC and PRCiO, within one week, a list of currently detained prisoners of war for the purposes of providing access and eventual exchange;

The sides will provide in writing comments and questions related to possible ceasefire verification mechanisms in accordance with item 2 of the October 10 joint statement.

The sides engaged in an open and substantive exchange of views aimed at clarifying their negotiating positions on core elements of a comprehensive solution in accordance with item 3 of the October 10 joint statement.”¹⁶

The Co-Chairs would continue working with the sides intensively to find a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Peace finally came, not with the empty and procrastinating words of the Minsk Group co-chairs, but with the resolute intervention of Russia. Prime Minister Pashinyan was the first to announce the ceasefire agreement on 10 November.

Pashinyan, having signed statement with Putin and Aliyev on ending war in Karabakh, said:

“I signed a statement with the presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan on ending the Karabakh war since 01:00 (00:00 Moscow Time). The text of the published statement is inexpressibly sensitive for me personally

16 “Press Statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group”, *OSCE*, October 30, 2020, <https://www.osce.org/minsk-group/468984>

and for our people. I made the decision after a deep analysis of the military situation and the assessment by people who know it better than anyone,”

Pashinyan noted that he made “a very and very hard decision”. According to him:

“this step is based on a conviction that this is the best possible solution in the current situation... I will speak in detail about all this in the coming days. This is not victory, but there won't be a defeat unless you recognize yourself as a loser. We will never recognize ourselves as losers and this should usher in our era of national unification and revival.”¹⁷

Below is the text of the agreement:

“President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation We, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan I. G. Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikolai Pashinyan and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin announced the following:

1. A complete ceasefire and cessation of all hostilities in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is announced from 00:00 hours Moscow time on November 10, 2020. The Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, hereinafter referred to as the Parties, stop at their positions.
2. The Aghdam region and the territories held by the Armenian Party in the Gazakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan shall be returned to the Azerbaijan Party by November 20, 2020.
3. Along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor, a peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is being deployed in the amount of 1,960 servicemen with small arms, 90 armored personnel carriers, 380 units of automobile and special equipment.
4. The peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is being deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces. The duration of the stay of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is five years, with automatic extension for the next

17 “Pashinyan says signed statement with Putin and Aliyev on ending war in Karabakh”, *TASS*, November 10, 2020, <https://tass.com/world/1221707>

five-year periods, if none of the Parties declares six months before the expiration of the period of intention to terminate the application of this provision.

5. In order to increase the effectiveness of control over the implementation of the agreements by the Parties to the conflict, a peacekeeping center is being deployed to control the ceasefire.

6. The Republic of Armenia will return the Kelbajar region to the Republic of Azerbaijan by November 15, 2020, and the Lachin region by December 1, 2020, leaving behind the Lachin corridor (five kilometers wide), which will ensure the connection of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and at the same time will not affect the city of Shushi. By agreement of the Parties, in the next three years, a plan for the construction of a new traffic route along the Lachin corridor, providing communication between Stepanakert and Armenia, with the subsequent redeployment of the Russian peacekeeping contingent to protect this route will be determined. The Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees traffic safety along the Lachin corridor of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions.

7. Internally displaced persons and refugees will return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas under the control of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

8. There will be an exchange of prisoners of war and other detained persons and bodies of the dead.

9. All economic and transport links in the region are unblocked. The Republic of Armenia provides transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in order to organize the unimpeded movement of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions. Control over transport communication will be carried out by the bodies of the Border Guard Service of the FSB of Russia. By agreement of the Parties, the construction of new transport communications linking the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic with the western regions of Azerbaijan will be provided.”¹⁸

Kremlin spokesman called the ceasefire agreement a “victory of the peoples of the two countries” and said that a monitoring center with the participation

18 “No:406/20, Statement By The President Of The Republic Of Azerbaijan”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, November 11, 2020, <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/7026/view>

of Turkish troops would be set up on the Azerbaijani side¹⁹. The Turkish Parliament adopted due resolution on 17 November to implement this understanding. The text of the resolution reads as follows:

“Friendly and brotherly country Azerbaijan’s struggle to save its occupied territories has been going on for years.

In response to Armenia’s attacks against military and civilian targets along the Nagorno-Karabakh front line on 27 September 2020, Azerbaijan achieved significant success in the liberation of its occupied territories due to the counter operation launched based on the right of self-defense.

Based on international law and legitimate sovereignty rights, Turkey has supported, from the beginning of the process, Azerbaijan to defend all of its rights, including its territorial integrity. As a result, Azerbaijan’s progress in the counterattack has created a new situation in the field.

Following the agreement between Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia, a ceasefire was established in the region as of 00.00 on 10 November 2020, and a plan was announced to include the return of some occupied territories to Azerbaijan in line with the schedule.

According to the agreement, a Joint Center will be established in the Azerbaijani territories liberated from the occupation to inspect the compliance with the ceasefire. Upon Azerbaijan’s request, it was decided for Turkey and Russia to take place in the Center jointly.

A Joint Center, in a place to be determined by Azerbaijan (which Turkey and Russia will form together) and the activities to be carried out by Center (where the Turkish Armed Forces personnel, and if needed, civilian personnel from our country take part), under the agreement which was signed on 16 August 2010 the “Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance” between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey with the commitments of our country, under the international law, the United Nations Security Council resolutions, and the principles of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which register the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan; has been assessed that it will be for the benefit of the peace and prosperity of the people in the region and is necessary for our national interest.

19 “Peskov called the end of the war in Karabakh a victory of the two countries”, *Teller Report*, November 10, 2020, <https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2020-11-10-peskov-called-the-end-of-the-war-in-karabakh-a-victory-of-the-two-countries.SJ-35TRwYP.html>

With these considerations, to fulfill our obligations arising from the ‘Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey’, the establishment of a ceasefire, prevention of violations, ensuring peace and stability in the region to effectively preserve and to protect Turkey’s higher interests, in way in which the arms, weapons, limit, and extent shall be determined by the President, Turkish Armed Forces should be sent to foreign countries to act in line with the functions of the Joint Center, and these forces should be used in accordance with the principles to be determined by the President and to take every measure necessary to eliminate the risks and threats and to make arrangements that will allow them to be determined by the President of the Republic. It was thus accepted at the 16th Meeting of the General Assembly dated 17.11.2020 that this was allowed to be made in accordance with the principles to be determined, for a period of one year in line with Article 92 of the Constitution.”²⁰

President of Georgia welcomed the agreement and said,

“A new era is beginning in the Caucasus. I congratulate our friends, Armenia and Azerbaijan for ending the tragic war. There is no alternative to peace and stability. Together we are starting a new phase of cooperation.”²¹

President of Iran expressed satisfaction for the adoption of the declaration of ending the war. He said,

“Being the neighbor of both countries and considering our numerous historical similarities with the regional peoples, Iran expresses satisfaction over the decision made by the leaders of the two countries mediated by Russia to end the military operations and start the process of diplomatic settlement.”²²

President of France called for a “lasting political solution” within the framework of the Minsk Group which should also “preserve Armenia’s interests”. He also added that France, which is home to a strong Armenian community, “stands by Armenia at this difficult time”. He also called for

20 “1272 Sayılı Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti Arasında Stratejik Ortaklık ve Karşılıklı Yardım Anlaşması Hükümlerinden Kaynaklanan Taahhütlerimizi Yerine Getirmek, ...” *T.C. Resmi Gazete*, 18 Kasım 2020, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/fihrist?tarikh=2020-11-18>

21 “A new era starts in the Caucasus. I congratulate our friends Armenia and Azerbaijan for ending a tragic war and thank all the facilitators. My sympathy to the families of the victims. Peace and stability have no alternative! We launch together a #newchapter of cooperation,” *Twitter*, username: @Zourabichvili_S, November 10, 2020, https://twitter.com/Zourabichvili_S/status/1326105187572985858

22 “Iranian President expresses satisfaction over declaration of ending war in Nagorno Karabakh”, *ArmenPress*, November 10, 2020, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1034512.html>

“strong measures to protect the religious and cultural heritage of this region”. The French Foreign Minister on his part, said that France had taken note of the agreement and was examining its terms and implications. “Clarifications are expected in order to assess their impact” he said.

In view of this official line, it was not surprising, but nevertheless shocking, that the upper house of parliament of France, the Senate, adopted a resolution on 25 November, with 305 votes in favor, 1 against and 30 abstentions, calling on the government to recognize the illegal Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh government. Aware of the absurdity of the resolution, the Foreign Ministry shortly after announced that France does not recognize the resolution of the Senate.

The US State Department echoed France’s view, saying there were still questions needed to clarify about the deal.

President of Russia defended the agreement on 17 November and said that the deal laid the basis for long term normalization “for the disputed Nagorno Karabakh region”. Foreign Minister of Russia was more to the point. He stated that US and France were nursing “wounded pride” over the Moscow-brokered deal. In an interview with a Russian TV channel on 19 November, he said,

“In my contacts with American and French colleagues as well as in contacts between President Macron and President Putin on the Nagorno Karabakh issue over the past few days, clearly there is wounded pride. And this is sad.”²³

The Russian Foreign Minister met on 18 November with the US and French co-chairs of the Minsk Group to discuss the future of the peace process. He then headed a Russian interdepartmental governmental delegation to the region, arriving in Armenia on 21 November. In a briefing he gave in Yerevan, he rejected doubts over the trilateral ceasefire agreement. He said that issues related to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement were fully discussed at the meeting with the Armenian leadership, including ensuring the operation of the Russian peacekeeping mission and conducting humanitarian actions. The delegation also included the Minister of Defense of Russia. The Armenian and Russian defense ministers signed documents regulating the framework of the actions of the Russian peacekeeping troops in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone.²⁴

23 “Putin defends Karabakh deal after France criticism”, *Yahoo News*, November 17, 2020, <https://news.yahoo.com/putin-defends-karabakh-deal-france-183053056.html>

24 “Russian interdepartmental delegation to visit Armenia – MFA”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, November 20, 2020, <https://en.armradio.am/2020/11/20/russian-interdepartmental-delegation-to-visit-armenia-mfa/>

The EU also welcomed the agreement with a declaration by the High Representative on 11 November. He called upon the sides to engage in substantive negotiations without delay under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, without preconditions and on the basis of agreed upon principles²⁵.

The Colonel General, former head of Army General Staff of Armenia, after resigning his post, made a disclosure on 19 November to the press that Armenia launched Russian made Iskander missiles into Azerbaijan during the latest war.

3. Armenia's Foreign Relations

The foreign relations and contacts of Armenia during the period under review were limited and restricted with COVID-19 conditions and fighting in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. Prime Minister Pashinyan travelled to Minsk to attend the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council. On this occasion he met and held private talks with his Russian counterpart on 17 July. Pashinyan underlined that the meeting coincided with the recent escalation on the Armenian-Azerbaijan border²⁶. The Russian Prime Minister on his part referred to their first meeting in Almaty in January and lamented that bilateral trade had declined due to the pandemic.

The Armenian Foreign Minister had a trilateral telephone conversation with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy together with the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan on 22 July, to assess the situation following the fighting on July 12-14 at their common border. A common understanding could not be reached.

Following the 4 August harbor explosion in Beirut, Armenia's Chief Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs went to Lebanon, announcing that the Armenian government was preparing an aid package to help ethnic Armenians in Lebanon to emigrate to Armenia²⁷.

On August 15, Foreign Minister had telephone conversation with his counterparts from Greece and GASC. The three referred to recent developments in the Aegean-eastern Mediterranean region. Armenian

25 "EU welcomes cessation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh", *EU Neighbors*, November 11, 2020, <https://euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/news/eu-welcomes-cessation-hostilities-nagorno-karabakh>

26 "Eurasian Intergovernmental Council session kicks off in Minsk, Belarus", *Public Radio of Armenia*, July 17, 2020, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1022117.html>

27 "Armenia encouraging migrants following Beirut blast".

Foreign Minister reaffirmed his country's unconditional support to Greece and GASC²⁸.

Armenia's position and approach to the opposition movement in Belarussian presidential elections caused visible strains. Asked whether Armenia recognized the Belarussian presidential election results as legitimate, the Foreign Minister reminded that Pashinyan congratulated the President of Belarus. He rejected to draw parallels between Belarus protests and Armenian "velvet revolution". On the other hand, Armenia abstained from voting on the issue of investigating human rights violations in Belarus during the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council together with Angola, Cameroon, DR of Congo, and Nigeria²⁹.

President A. Sarkisian, having his vacation abroad, met in London, where he previously served as his country's ambassador, with UK Minister for European Neighborhood and the Americas.

On 11 September, Foreign Minister called on his Iranian counterpart. The Ministry's statement read: "A number of issues on the bilateral agenda were discussed. It was possible to develop traditional friendship dialogue based on mutual trust and to take steps to expand cooperation."³⁰

Foreign Minister paid an official visit to Egypt in early September. He held a press conference in Cairo on 14 September, after his meeting with his Egyptian counterpart. He voiced strong support for Egypt's position in its dispute with Turkey over maritime boundaries in eastern Mediterranean and the conflict in Libya. He spoke of the "same source of destabilization" in the South Caucasus, east Mediterranean and North Africa. He also said: "We stand in solidarity with Greece and Cyprus on their inalienable rights to economic activities in the exclusive economic zone in line with international law"³¹ and emphasized his country's solidarity and support to Egypt in the same way. He was then received by the Egyptian President. He also met with the Secretary General of the Arab League. On 15 September, on his way to Tbilisi, Egypt's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities stopped briefly in Yerevan to hold talks.

28 "Armenian FM discusses Turkish provocations with Greek, Cypriot counterparts", *Public Radio of Armenia*, August 15, 2020, <https://en.armradio.am/2020/08/15/armenian-fm-discusses-turkish-provocations-with-greek-cypriot-counterparts/>

29 "Armenian PM comments on voting at UNHCR over Belarus", *Public Radio of Armenia*, September 16, 2020, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1027895.html>

30 "We stand in solidarity with Greece and Cyprus on their inalienable rights to economic activities in the exclusive economic zone in line with international law", *ArmlInfo*, October 10, 2020.

31 "Armenia reiterates solidarity with Greece and Cyprus". *Public Radio of Armenia*, September 14, 2020, <https://en.armradio.am/2020/09/14/armenia-reiterates-solidarity-with-greece-and-cyprus/>

Russian and Armenian top army generals met in Moscow on 5 September as troops from the two countries began a joint military exercise in Northwestern Armenia, near the Armenian-Turkish border. It involved about a thousand soldiers of the Russian military base in Gyumri, 200 tanks, artillery systems as well as two dozen Russian and Armenian war planes. The total number of Russian troops in Armenia is around 4000-5000 soldiers. In 2010, the interstate agreement on the Russian military base in Armenia was extended until 2044. In addition, servicemen of the Border Guard Department of the Russian Federal Security Service are stationed to protect the border between Turkey and Iran. Later in the month, Armenia joined the “Caucasus 2020 Joint Military Exercises” held on 21-25 September with the participation of Russia, China, Belarus, Iran, Myanmar, Pakistan, and some others³².

The second session of the strategic dialogue between the US and Armenia was held remotely on 14 September. The first was held in Yerevan in May 2019. The discussions focused on joint achievements and future cooperation to advance democratic reforms in Armenia, including anti-corruption and judicial and legal reforms. On 16 September, the 2020 session of “Armenia-US Joint Trade and Investment Council” was held. The Council was established in 2015 following the “Trade and Investment Framework Agreement” signed on 7 May 2006 for the strengthening, further deepening identification of barriers, expansion, and diversification of trade in goods and services between the parties. The trade turnover of Armenia with the US in 2019 amounted to 334,2 million dollars, with an increase of 47.8% compared to the previous year. In 2019, the main products exported from Armenia were aluminum foil, diamonds, copper scrap, scrap, alcoholic beverages, jewelry, canned fruits, nuts, and berries³³.

Armenia signed a contract with an American lobbying firm headed by former US Senator Bob Dole for assisting ‘strategic’ talks with the US on 23 September. The lobbying firm is to prepare for the final round of the US-Armenia Strategic Dialogue to take place in Washington. The first session of the “strategic dialogue” was held in Yerevan in May 2019. US officials promised greater financial assistance to Armenia at the May 2019 talks. Indeed, US increased its assistance by 40%, to over 60 million dollars.

Armenian Ministry of Defense’s National Defense Research University held a virtual meeting with US Kansas National Guard State Partnership program on 23 September for talks on military models in partnership exchange.

32 “Russia, China launch massive ‘Caucasus 2020’ military exercises”, *RFI.fr*, September 21, 2020, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20200921-russia-china-launch-massive-caucasus-2020-military-exercises-belarus-iran-pakistan-ukraine-us-nato>

33 “Growth In Trade Turnover Between Armenia And Russia Slows Down”, *FinPort*, September 10, 2020, https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=42242&lang=3

Provocations in the US Congress continued in support of the anti-Turkish Armenian narrative as some members of Congress called on the Library of Congress to change the current subject heading “Armenian massacres” to that of “Armenian Genocide”. The Armenian Congressional Caucus introduced a resolution on 1 October “condemning Azerbaijan’s military operation in Nagorno Karabakh and denouncing Turkish interference in the conflict³⁴. Reacting to continued pro-Armenian, anti-Turkish remarks, Turkish ambassador to the US criticized a member of Congress publicly for twisting the truth as well as realities on the ground, saying that Americans deserved to know the truth, not politically motivated distortions. At the aftermath of the defeat of Armenia and signing of the trilateral 10 November agreement, Armenian Congressional Caucus was again aggressive and audacious to write to the President Elect of the USA Joe Biden, appealing not only to come to the assistance of Armenia but also to punish Azerbaijan and engage in a thorough review of policy towards Turkey.

On 17 September, a building next to an Armenian church in San Francisco burned down, where arson was suspected. On 22 September, an Armenian school, also in San Francisco, was target of a pattern of hate crimes as police reported that shots were fired at the school building over the weekend³⁵. The same school was vandalized by spray paints back in July. On this occasion, with historical insight to such provocations, we are pleased to be, for once, in full agreement with US Congressman Adam Schiff, a vocal advocate of Armenian community, who called that “those responsible for this act of hate must be swiftly brought to justice”. We hope and expect that those words will be followed up.

Armenia opened its embassy in Tel Aviv on September 18, one year after upgrading its relations with Israel. Armenia and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1992 but had no embassies in each other’s capitals.

Pashinyan addressed the UN General Assembly at its 75th anniversary held virtually due to the pandemic. His target was Turkey. He delivered the following jibes:

“The calls made by the international community during the July escalation were mainly about maintaining the ceasefire, dialogue and restraint of the parties. Turkey, however, in line with its destabilizing policy of expanding its influence, has spared no effort to escalate

34 “Library of Congress Corrects ‘Armenian Massacres’ Heading to ‘Armenian Genocide’”, *Asbarez*, October 21, 2020, <https://asbarez.com/197778/library-of-congress-corrects-armenian-massacres-heading-to-armenian-genocide/>

35 “Shots fired at Armenian school in San Francisco”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, September 22, 2020, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1028360/>

tensions in neighboring regions such as the Mediterranean, North Africa, the Middle East and the South Caucasus.”

“By unilaterally supporting Azerbaijan and expanding its military presence there, Turkey is stepping up its efforts to [damage the establishment of] peace and stability in the region, [such as] the initiatives of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs to this end.”

“Turkey is directly threatening Armenia with its demonstratively belligerent stance abroad, holding provocative joint military exercises with Azerbaijan in the immediate vicinity of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.”

Turkey builds its policy in our region on tribal traditions, manipulation of conflicts, justification of the Armenian genocide, impunity for this crime. Turkey is a security threat to Armenia and the region.”³⁶

The Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed the following letter to the Secretary General of the UN on 16 September in response to Pashinyan’s remarks:

“Letter dated 16 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, I am writing to you concerning the statement made by the Prime Minister of Armenia during the general debate of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, as well as recent notes verbales and letters of the Permanent Mission of the said country, a list of which is attached herewith

First of all, I would like to reiterate the well-known fact that, under international law, “genocide” is a strictly defined crime with very specific conditions of proof. It was legally established for the first time in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, according to which the authoritative determination of this crime can solely be made by a competent court, after proper investigation and adjudication. As regards the events of 1915, which predate the Convention by decades, there does not exist any such judgment. On the contrary, recent court judgments clearly point to the historic and non-justiciable nature of the events concerned and confirm that these events are indeed the subject of a legitimate debate protected under the freedom of expression.

36 “Pashinyan Addresses UN on 75th Anniversary”, *Mirror Spectator*, October 1, 2020, <https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/10/01/pashinyan-addresses-un-on-75th-anniversary/>

Concerning Armenia's numerous absurd and unsubstantiated allegations regarding Turkey, it is ironic if not outright hypocritical that such assertions come from a country which overtly glorifies the perpetrators of the brutal terrorist attacks committed against Turkish citizens and diplomats in the 1970s and 1980s, while continuing to incite hostilities and committing international law violations in Azerbaijan's territories that it has occupied for more than a quarter of a century.

The international community should make no mistake that the current outbreak of hostilities is the direct consequence of Armenia's consistent provocations on the ground. Armenia's complete disregard of international law and blatant violation of A/75/525 S/2020/1024 2/3 20-13763 Security Council resolutions in particular have brought the region where it is today. It should also not be forgotten, despite Armenia's attempts to that end, that Azerbaijan has been exercising its inherent right of self-defence, since the hostilities are taking place exclusively on its own sovereign territory.

Moreover, Armenian armed forces continue to target the civilian population and objects along the line of contact in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The indiscriminate shelling by the Armenian armed forces has wreaked havoc on the civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, medical centres, school buildings and kindergartens. Since 4 October 2020, the armed forces of Armenia have expanded the area of their strikes against the civilian population and infrastructure of major cities of Azerbaijan, away from the combat zone, including Ganja and Mingachevir, with long-range artillery and rocket fire.

Armenia's use of foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries from a number of countries is also well documented. Yerevan is receiving support from some terrorist groups, primarily the People's Protection Units/Kurdistan Workers' Party (YPG/PKK), which has long-standing ties with other terrorist groups, such as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA). Since 1973, 58 Turkish citizens, including 31 diplomats and their family members, lost their lives as a result of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Armenian terrorist organizations, namely ASALA, the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG) and the Armenian Revolutionary Army (ARA). As of today, certain Armenian diaspora organizations, operating under the cover of charity, have also been instrumental in mobilizing funds and facilitating the transfer of foreign terrorist fighters to the conflict zone.

Turkey has adopted a consistent and principled position regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict since the beginning. We continue to support a solution to the problem on the basis of international law, within the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. In this vein, we would like to remind Armenia once again of its obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to uphold without delay the relevant Security Council resolutions (resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 883 (1993)), which reflect the will and understanding of the international community, calling for the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Nevertheless, instead of taking responsibility, Armenian leadership resorts to black propaganda and defamation against Turkey, to divert attention from the gross international law violations that it continues to commit. Armenian allegations about Turkish involvement in the field and about the fighters from outside are baseless and irrational. Both Azerbaijan and the relevant authorities in Turkey totally and unequivocally rejected these Armenian fabrications. This disinformation campaign aims to portray Armenia as the victim, while it continues its illegal occupation. Armenia's baseless and hostile claims are no more credible than its practice of politicizing and distorting historical events.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 8, 35, 40 and 114, and of the Security Council.³⁷

Armenian Foreign Minister sent a letter on 28 September to UN Secretary General, expressing concern over "Turkey's unconditional unilateral support to Azerbaijan and its aggression". He also alleged that "the aggression is preplanned and the statements of the Azerbaijani side about the alleged counterattack are absolute lie³⁸".

However, the spokesperson for the UN Secretary General told a briefing on 28 September that the UN could independently confirm or deny reports that Turkey has interfered in the current escalation in the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh. He further said the following about Ankara's possible

37 "Letter dated 16 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General", *United Nations*, October 16, 2020, <https://www.undocs.org/en/A/75/525>

38 "Special meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council to discuss", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia*, 30 September 2020, https://www.mfa.am/en/embassy-news/2020/09/30/OSCE_SP/10477

interference: “We have no information to the veracity of this claim and many other claims that are being made.”³⁹

The spokesperson of the Turkish Foreign Ministry gave the following answer on 13 November to a question regarding an announcement of the Human Rights Council:

“The baseless allegations mentioned in the press release of the UN Human Rights Council’s Special Procedures Mechanism are detached from the facts on the ground. The reason behind the circulation of these fake news is Armenia’s intention to divert attention away from its illegal occupation and create the perception of a supposedly “victimized country fighting against international terrorism”.

It is proven that Armenia has recorded images of the members of the Syrian National Army and circulated them on the internet as pseudo evidence. Neither these fake videos nor the comments of people paid in exchange of testimony have any credibility or validity.

The press release made without waiting for Turkey’s views and based on black propaganda products of fake images and fabricated news has undermined the credibility of the UN Special Procedures Mechanism. What is expected from the Mechanism is to work transparently and collect the views of all relevant parties, rather than make biased and misleading statements.

On the other hand, we find it positive, yet insufficient, for the statement to mention that Armenia has used foreign fighters in the clashes. It is common knowledge that Armenia deployed Syria based PKK / YPG terrorists to Nagorno Karabakh. In fact, many PKK terrorists, whose names were known to us, were neutralized by the Azerbaijani army in the fighting.

As the Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan has confessed, many ethnic Armenian citizens of third countries took part in the clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh. We would have expected the Special Rapporteurs to investigate this information, which is supported with images in open sources, in greater detail and reflect it in the statement.

Although the statement mentions deliberate attacks on civilians, we deem it a deliberate neglect not to mention that it was Armenia doing this. As stated by Prime Minister Pashinyan’s military adviser, Armenia

39 “UN can’t confirm Turkey interfered in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – spokesperson”, *TASS*, September 28, 2020, <https://tass.com/world/1206127>

has deliberately attacked civilian settlements in Azerbaijan with illegal cluster bombs in order to create chaos among the people, thus has committed war crimes. Armenia's violation of international law has also been recorded by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International."⁴⁰

China opened its new embassy complex in Armenia on 23 September. It is said to be the largest Chinese embassy complex in the region and second largest in the former Soviet Union. President A. Sarkisian attended the inauguration ceremony, saying that its construction highlights Beijing's desire to deepen Chinese-Armenian relations.

Prime Minister Pashinyan called on President of France as fighting erupted on 27 September, to express his deep concern and the possibility of its further aggravation. President of France said that further escalation of tensions was unacceptable. He considered it necessary to take all measures to stop hostilities and defuse the tension. He stressed the need to intensify the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs to restore peace in the region. Pashinyan also called on the German Chancellor Angele Merkel and pleaded the same with her. Merkel highlighted the cessation of fire and restoration of the peace process in line with the October 1 statement of the presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries.

Armenian Foreign Minister called his Greek counterpart on 2 October, informed him of the developments and highlighted the importance of hosting him in upcoming weeks. The Greek Foreign Minister duly paid a visit to Armenia on 16 October, availing himself, in tandem with his Armenian counterpart, to abusive statements against Turkey. The Turkish Foreign Ministry reacted with the following reply:

“The remarks and claims of Nikos Dendias, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, regarding our country during his visit to Armenia is a new proof of Greece's choice for a policy of tension and escalation in its relations with Turkey, rather than good neighbourliness, dialogue and cooperation.

These claims would not cover up historical facts. Greece should not forget the atrocities it has committed in Anatolia for which it was convicted to pay compensation and should read the history correctly, renounce “megali idea” and Turkish hostility.

40 “QA-110, 13 November 2020, Statement of the Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Allegations Mentioned in the Press Release of the UN Human Rights Council's Special Procedures Mechanism”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, November 13, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-110_-bm-insan-haklari-konseyi-ozel-prosedurler-mekanizmasi-nin-aciklamasinda-yer-alan-iddialar-hk-sc.tr.mfa

The common denominator of the solution of all problems in our region is Turkey, while the creator of the problems or the supporter of the creators of the problems is Greece.

It is Greece that supports the cruel Esad regime in Syria, the putschist Hafter in Libya, the occupier Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh, opens its doors for all terrorist organizations including PKK, PYD, FETÖ, which commit acts against Turkey, transforms Aegean sea into the grave of immigrants and pursues expansionist policies in the Aegean sea and Mediterranean.

The Greek Foreign Minister needs to differentiate between the occupier and the victim in Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven regions surrounding it, and call on the international community to condemn the illegal Armenian occupation in the Azerbaijani territories for the last 28 years despite the UN Security Council Resolutions that urge Armenia to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw.

Greece should abandon these policies and read Turkey, the realities of the region and the world correctly.”⁴¹

The Armenian President paid a visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels on 21 October, met with the NATO Secretary General, the two held a news conference after talks⁴². A CSTO member country president was thus accorded the opportunity of reception to accuse a NATO member of obstructing international efforts to stop hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, with no reported objection to his distorted and misleading words. Those words appeared in an expanded version on October 26 in an American paper.

Below is the re-print provided by the President’s Office:

“On September 30, I drafted a special letter to several world leaders to describe to them the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, a contested region of the Caucasus inhabited predominately by ethnic Armenians. It has been attacked aggressively by Azerbaijan, with the full support of Turkey. I could hardly anticipate the scope of the aggression and the lack of humanity in the behaviour of their forces. Then and even now, the reality on the ground that my fellow Armenians

41 “QA-101, 16 October 2020, Statement of the Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Remarks of Nikos Dendias, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, in Armenia”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, October 16, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-101_-yunan-disisleri-bakani-dendias-in-ermenistan-daki-ifadeleri-hk-sc.en.mfa

42 “President of Armenia visits the NATO Headquarters”, *NATO Official Website*, October 21, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_179008.htm

are experiencing is more than alarming, and risks igniting further escalation and insecurity in the region and even beyond.

Months and even years before the military aggression by Azerbaijan on September 27, the Azerbaijani leadership was using very harsh, militaristic rhetoric and overtly voicing, at the highest levels of government, its intentions to resolve the conflict through a fully fledged war. Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia have been facing similar attempts for more than 25 years since a ceasefire was established after the first Karabakh war in 1994. Ever since then, the rhetoric and the destructive behaviour of Azerbaijan has never faded.

Nagorno-Karabakh – or Artsakh, as we call it in Armenia – has always been populated overwhelmingly by Armenians. It has never been a voluntary part of independent Azerbaijan. In 1921, Nagorno-Karabakh was given as a gift by Russia under Josef Stalin to Soviet Azerbaijan, which was not an independent state, but a part of the Soviet Union.

Following decades of continued discrimination, in 1987 and 1988 the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh began to raise their voices to re-join with Armenia. They conducted peaceful demonstrations and signed petitions. At the same time, ethnically motivated persecutions against Armenians in Soviet Azerbaijan mounted. There were pogroms and ethnic cleansing campaigns in a number of Azerbaijani cities.

During the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh declared their independence earlier than Azerbaijan. In fact, Azerbaijan declared its own independence from the Soviet Union in a separate process, without Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite this and other facts that, in Armenia's view, make Azerbaijan's claims baseless in the context of the international law, the government in Baku seeks has, for about 30 years, sought to oppress with military means the right of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (or the Republic of Artsakh) to live in their homeland. It pursues a policy of forcibly capturing lands, cleansing them of their native inhabitants and heritage and ignoring the basic, fundamental rights.

After 30 years of rejecting any attempts at a peaceful solution, Azerbaijan, supported militarily and politically by Turkey, is once again attacking Armenia's cherished homeland. Azerbaijan's position is, in a sense, a continuation of the policies that Armenians have faced ever since the Ottoman Empire tried to perpetrate the genocide of Armenians almost 105 years ago. At that time, about 1,5 million ethnic Armenians perished, or were exiled and persecuted.

The Azerbaijani side today includes not only Turkish generals, officers and military experts, but also Turkish F-16 fighter jets and the infamous “Bayraktar” drones. Every day, these death machines and are involved in bombing Nagorno-Karabakh and even Armenia. Lethal and even prohibited weapons, such as cluster munition, have been deployed for more than three weeks against a huge number of Armenian civilians and civil infrastructure. The latter includes hospitals, houses and even kindergartens.

If you add to this the involvement of Syrian mercenaries, jihadists and radical fanatics who are now on Armenian soil killing my people, the full picture is clear. Mercenaries from international terrorist organisations fighting in the Middle East — in particular, Jabhat Al Nusra, Firqat Hamza and the Sultan Murad Division — are actively entering the fray. Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh are dealing with international terrorism.

Hence, we in Armenia remain very concerned and alert for those developments on the ground. We are also concerned by the hesitant stance of the international community, which needs to react immediately. It needs to apply pressure to Turkey to withdraw from our region with its weapons, mercenaries and cynicism. It needs to apply pressure to Azerbaijan to respect two ceasefires agreed on October 10 and 17. The war by Turkey and Azerbaijan against my nation risks creating another Syria in the Caucasus, with the potential to fuel a greater fire in the entire region and beyond.

Turkey does not hesitate to export Islamist militants and other terrorists into Azerbaijan. But, as usual, it needs an excuse for doing so. One of its excuses has been that Azerbaijanis are its ethnic kin. The reality is that that line of thinking simply doesn't work in the new world, because by that logic Turkey's ethnic kinship extends all the way into Central Asia, Mongolia, northern China and elsewhere. Is Ankara ready to interfere with any problem that its ethnic brothers may face there?

Perhaps the answer is yes — in which case, it is no wonder that modern Turkey has problematic relations virtually 360 degrees in every direction. It has had problems with Egypt. It is now involved in Libya. It speaks about the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, but in the meantime has crossed over its border with Iraq. It violates the territorial integrity of Syria. It is trying to be very present in Lebanon and in parts of the Gulf. It also has big issues in the Eastern Mediterranean. And now, it is in the Caucasus. All of this is unacceptable.

Leaders of civilised nations, regardless of their religious or ethnic identities, must act unequivocally to stop aggressors and establish long-lasting peace. We need peace, and it can only be reached through negotiation and talks. But this is what the Azerbaijani side rejects each and every time, for reasons that are horrific to the rest of us. They claim they have a legitimate right to use force – brutal, military force – against the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

We need to understand that there is no military solution to this and, I would say, to any conflict. Armenians have always believed that a solution has to be reached through peaceful negotiations and in a way that does not make things worse. This is why we have refrained from officially recognising the Republic of Artsakh, so as to allow the negotiations to take place and reach a peaceful solution. But Turkey and Azerbaijan seem to have a different understanding of what a solution is, and they push only a militaristic, aggressive and, in my view, genocidal agenda.

My appeal to Muslim and Arab leaders aims at asking them to use their influence and high prestige in the international arena to immediately stop the bloodshed and human suffering.

Together, we can stop this aggression, because we are proponents of peace, who reject war, violence and terrorism.”⁴³

In another interview he called on the West to understand that Turkey’s presence in Azerbaijan meant control over natural gas and oil from Central Asia to Europe. To a Belgian periodical, he claimed on 7 November that Turkey created instability everywhere and repeated that Turkey wanted to control the flow of energy from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, that Europe was the main target. He was much more limitless in his vocabulary in an interview that appeared in a Greek daily on 10 November.

Following the defeat of Armenia, he hastily made two visits abroad to Muslim countries, with a view to removing the perception that the war had religious connotations. He first went to the UAE and met with the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi on 15 November. He then went to Jordan on 23 November and met with the King. He publicly said that his reception showed to the Muslim world that Armenia was not alone.

43 “Armenian President: Turkey risks setting the whole Caucasus ablaze”, *The National News*, October 23, 2020, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/opinion/comment/armenian-president-turkey-risks-setting-the-whole-caucasus-ablaze-1.1097908>

On November 1 and 2 correspondingly, Russian President had phone calls with Armenian Prime Minister and Azerbaijan's President. According to the statement from Moscow, issues of the Nagorno Karabakh settlement were thoroughly discussed.

4. Turkey-Armenia Relations

The heightened tension translated into bitter official statements following the fighting in the Azerbaijan-Armenian border in July that continued unabated during the period under review, bringing the relations to its lowest ebb.

In response to Armenian Foreign Ministry's statement of 15 July, branding Turkey "a security threat to Armenia and the region", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the following statement setting the tone for future developments:

"We observe that Armenia now tries to resort to a hypocritical smear campaign against Turkey in an effort to cover up its aggressive actions against Azerbaijan.

This two-faced attitude of Armenia, which has been illegally occupying Azerbaijani territory for many years, clearly reveals who is the real obstacle to the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the South Caucasus.

Conducting foreign policy with such out of context accusations and slanders will benefit neither the region nor Armenia.

This approach is the manifestation of a mentality which constructs its identity by solely deriving enmity based on a one-sided interpretation of history and which tries to legitimize its own aggression in contravention of international law. This defective mentality that fuels aggressive nationalism is deplorable, but not surprising for us.

Armenian authorities need to come to their senses and comprehend, as soon as possible, that they should be part of the solutions, not problems, in the South Caucasus."⁴⁴

The President of Turkey as well as the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs also admonished the aggression of Armenia in harsh words. In that same vein,

44 "No: 154, 16 July 2020, Press Release Regarding the Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia on 15 July 2020", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, July 16, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-154_-ermenistan-disisleri-bakanligi-tarafindan-15-temmuz-2020-tarihinde-yapilan-aciklama-hk.cn.mfa

four out of the five political parties represented in the Turkish Grand National Assembly signed the following joint statement, condemning the Armenian aggression and expressing solidarity with Azerbaijan.

“As the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, we strongly condemn the attack carried out by the armed forces of Armenia that started on 12 July against Azerbaijan’s Tovuz region.

Armenia is on a faulty path. This attack, which serves as an example for the known aggressive posture of Armenia, which has been occupying the Azerbaijan territory of Upper Karabakh and adjacent territories for years, is the greatest obstacle to a lasting peace and stability in the South Caucasus.

We invite the international community to show the necessary reaction in the face of this action by Armenia that spurns justice and law.

We repeat our support for a resolution to the Upper Karabakh conflict through peaceful ways in the framework of Azerbaijan’s internationally recognized borders and territorial integrity.

Armenia must adhere to the UN Security Council and OSCE resolutions and withdraw from the territories of Azerbaijan that it has occupied.

In line the understanding of two states, one nation, Turkey, which has always been a defender of peace and stability, will -with all its means- continue from now on as well to stand beside Azerbaijan in its efforts to re-establish its territorial integrity.

We hereby relay our condolences the people and Government of friendly and brotherly Azerbaijan for our Azerbaijani martyrs and wish that its wounds are healed as soon as possible.⁴⁵

Armenia’s Turcophobic and irredentist ambitions were once again in display on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the defunct Treaty of Sévres of 10 August 1920. The operative part of a joint statement issued by 10 Armenian political parties is here below:

“1. The Sevres Treaty is not just a historical fact. It is an international treaty signed between states that exist today (or are their successors), the entering into force of which was suspended as a result of the shift in the military-political situation in the region.

45 “TBMM’de Dört Parti’den Ermenistan’ın Azerbaycan’a Saldırısına İlişkin Ortak Açıklama”, *TBMM Meclis Haber*, 16 Temmuz 2020, https://meclishaber.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/haber_portal.aciklama?p1=149114

2. International discussions on the Sevres Treaty should be promoted by the academic communities of the Republic of Armenia and the signatory states, and the political circles should demonstrate its importance in the context of the current geopolitical and regional processes.

3. There is no other multilaterally recognized international agreement between Armenia and the Republic of Turkey, which legally resolves the border issue between the two countries.

4. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Sevres Treaty and Arbitral Award of Woodrow Wilson, it is necessary to take political initiative, demonstrating

- The hostile policy of Turkey towards the Republic of Armenia in international relations

Illegal blockade of the Republic of Armenia by Turkey

- Consistent appropriation and destruction of the Armenian historical and cultural heritage for more than a century with the complicity of the Turkish authorities
- Turkey's aggressive military-political support to Azerbaijan, its un-constructive attempts to be involved in Karabakh conflict, which are often accompanied by war threats
- Destabilization of all neighboring regions of Turkey
- Violation of human rights, including the rights of national-religious minorities in Turkey, authorised by the state.
- Incompatibility of the approaches of the Turkish authorities to the modern political processes and the challenges faced by humanity.”⁴⁶

Prime Minister Pashinyan, in prepared remarks for him that were read on his behalf, at a conference titled “The Treaty of Sévres and the Armenian question” hosted by Armenia’s National Academy of Sciences, harped on the same claims.

In response, the same day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey issued the following statement:

46 “10 Armenian political parties issue statement over Sevres Treaty centennial”, *Hyetert*, August 12, 2020, <https://hyetert.org/2020/08/12/10-armenian-political-parties-issue-statement-over-sevres-treaty-centennial/>

“The Treaty of Sèvres which aimed at breaking up of our homeland and end our independence and sovereignty in the aftermath of WWI, was a case in point that put forward the disgraceful blueprints of invasion and destruction.

Honourable Turkish Nation sent the Sèvres to the ash heap of history through its heroic War of Liberation, followed by the Peace Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923. It is not surprising to see that those who opt for drawing animosity instead of a lesson from history after the lapse of a century, hope for help from this document.

Response of the noble Turkish Nation to those who had dared to invade Anatolia and its heavy blow to imperialism are in the textbooks of history. This glorious struggle provided an example to other oppressed nations as well.

Today, after 100 years, the dare of an administration that is unable to feed even its own population, to bring forward the Sèvres document which the Turkish Nation tore up, is preposterous.

Those who entertain such insidious aims need to know well that facing the determination of Turkey to ensure its indivisibility with its homeland and nation, these will stick in their gizzard.

Armenia which continues its illegal occupation of Azerbaijani lands for years, is the real impediment before the regional peace and stability. It is time for the authorities of Armenia to abandon aggressive nationalist and jingoist policies and come to their senses.”⁴⁷

The following day, the spokesperson for the Armenian Foreign Ministry responded by saying, “The Treaty of Sèvres is and will remain a historical fact, it will not be changed or scrapped”.

On 15 August, Armenian Foreign Minister had telephone talks with his counterparts from Greece and GASC where he reaffirmed Armenia’s unconditional support in the Aegean-eastern Mediterranean region, accusing Turkey of aggravating the situation.

The spokesperson of the Turkish Foreign Ministry addressed the words of the Armenian Minister with the following reply:

47 “No: 171, 10 August 2020, Press Release Regarding the Statements of the Authorities of Armenia on the Pretext of the Centenary of the Treaty of Sèvres”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, August 10, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-171_-sevr-anlasmasi-nin-100-yildonumu-bahanesiyle-ermenistan-makamlarinca-yapilan-aciklamalar-hk.tr.mfa

“It is conspicuous that Armenia, who dared to propound a remark regarding the Eastern Mediterranean, is in a fallacious perception of the global geography and her place in it. The issue at hand is the Eastern Mediterranean, not Lake Sevan.

Following her provocative statement on the Treaty of Sèvres, Armenia expressing an opinion regarding the Eastern Mediterranean this time, is a novel instance of impertinence and irresponsibility.

Coming after the examples of the United Arab Emirates and France, the fact that Armenia, a country with no coastline to any sea, presumes itself worthy of speaking about the Eastern Mediterranean, unravels the dimensions of an insidious alliance that is being attempted to be forged against Turkey.

No matter what, Turkey will resolutely continue to protect both her and Turkish Cypriots’ rights in the Eastern Mediterranean stemming from international law. No alliance of malice will manage to prevent this. Those who think otherwise have not taken their lessons from history.

On this occasion, Turkey would also like to remind that, with all her means and capabilities, she stands by brotherly Azerbaijan.”⁴⁸

Prime Minister Pashinyan chaired a meeting of the National Security Council on 21 August. There, he is reported to have announced a new National Security Strategy where, with regard Turkey, having said the following:

“I believe that Turkey’s destabilizing and destructive activity causes significant concerns and worries among our partners in the Middle East, the Eurasian region as well as the European region. This is an agenda which is already developed and our actions in this agenda must also become the subject of highly important discussions at the Security Council, the foreign ministry and we will discuss issues connected with this during today’s session.”⁴⁹

On 31 August, Armenian media reported that the Kurdish community in Armenia held demonstration in Yerevan, outside the UN Office. It was reported

48 “QA-77, 16 August 2020, Statement of the Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Statement of Armenia on the Eastern Mediterranean”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, August 16, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-77_-ermenistan-in-dogu-akdeniz-aciklamasi-hk-sc.en.mfa

49 “PM Pashinyan slams Turkey for “destabilizing and destructive” actions in region and globally”, *Artsakh News*, November 21, 2020, <https://artsakhpress.am/eng/news/131238/pobedniye-iyulskie-boi-dokazalichto-karabakhskiiy-vopros-ne-imeet-voennogo-resheniya-pashinyan.html>

that they asked for UN support for democracy in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, focusing on Turkey.

The Armenian Foreign Minister declared on 31 August, in an interview with a Russian press agency, which was also aired by the *Public Radio of Armenia*, that Turkey's actions remained a threat to Armenia's security. He made the following remarks:

“The policy of destabilization and aggression on the part of Turkey is a threat to all neighboring regions, including the eastern Mediterranean, northern Africa and the Middle East. Today Turkey is trying to export this policy of destabilization to the South Caucasus region. This is a serious concern. Turkey is pursuing an unconstructive and dangerous policy. Turkey's actions continue to pose a threat to the security of Armenia. In this regard, Armenia will work to further strengthen its security, including through cooperation with its partners.”⁵⁰

The Armenian Foreign Ministry confirmed on 2 September a German magazine report that Turkey refused permission to a German military transport aircraft headed for Yerevan to fly over its airspace, condemning Turkey for obstruction of “NATO peacekeepers' operation”.

On 2 September, Foreign Ministry spokesperson said at a press conference that Armenia did not consider Turkey, a member of the Minsk Group, as a mediator in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement.

On 6 September, the Armenian community in Turkey held the annual divine liturgy in the 1100-year-old Armenian church in Van with the participation of a 25-member delegation of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, headed by Patriarch Sahak II Mashalyan. The event was also reported in the Armenian media.

In an official visit to Egypt, Armenian Foreign Minister reiterated on 14 September his often versed and well-worn accusations against Turkey as well as solidarity with Greece and GASC in an effort to get reciprocal Egyptian support to his country's policies against Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Not satisfied with the results of accusations he is used to hurling at Turkey, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia also came up with a novel argument that Turkey has been denying Armenia's right to access to sea. On 23 September he reiterated this accusation at an online ministerial meeting of the

50 “Turkey's actions remain a threat to Armenia's security, Foreign Minister says”, *Public Radio of Armenia*, August 31, 2020, <https://en.armradio.am/2020/08/31/turkeys-actions-remain-a-threat-to-armenias-security-foreign-minister-says/>

group of landlocked countries. His interlocuters however must have been well aware of the irrelevance of this statement on two grounds: The reason why Turkey closed its border with Armenia was due to the occupation of Azerbaijani territory and Armenia already has a way to open seas through both Georgia and Iran.

The 75th session of the UN General Assembly witnessed Pashinyan's rhetoric against Turkey and Turkish President stating Turkey as the biggest obstacle to local peace and stability in the South Caucasus.

On 27 September, war erupted following fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh between the armed forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenia was quick in accusing Turkey. Prime Minister Pashinyan called on the French President the same day, inquiring his help to stop possible Turkish intervention. In the words of the Foreign Minister, to an international TV channel the next day: "this aggression is accompanied by large scale support from Turkey".

Turkish President's words were quoted in the Armenian press as follows:

"'Defend your future': Erdogan calls on Armenians to stand against govt as clashes with Azerbaijan resume

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called on Armenians to stand in opposition to their government, which is the "biggest threat" to peace in the region, after military hostilities resumed with Azerbaijan.

Erdogan urged the people of Armenia to safeguard their future from their country's leadership, which he claimed is using them like "puppets."

In a series of tweets, the Turkish leader expressed hope that the "whole world" would stand with Azerbaijan in its "struggle against occupation and oppression."

"Armenia once again showed that it is the biggest threat to peace and tranquility in the region," Erdogan wrote. He also lashed out at the Minsk Group, which was formed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to help facilitate a peaceful resolution to the territorial dispute between Baku and Yerevan. He accused the international body of "double standards" when dealing with the two nations, claiming that Armenian "aggression" has gone overlooked for nearly three decades.

Ankara threw its full support behind Baku after Armenian and Azeri forces clashed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region on Sunday morning. The ruling conservative Justice and Development Party, which is led by

Erdogan, released a statement condemning Yerevan for “playing with fire” and accused Armenia of threatening regional peace.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been bitter rivals since both nations secured their independence in the 1990s. The mutual distrust comes from a years-long dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, a predominantly Armenian area landlocked inside Azeri territory. Baku claims sovereignty over the region, while Yerevan treats it as an independent nation and ally. Both nations have accused each other of sparking the latest military flare-up in the border region.”⁵¹

Turkish President’s spokesman stated:

“We believe this conflict can be resolved through peaceful negotiations, but the Armenian side has shown no interest so far other than continuing to occupy parts of Azerbaijan. That occupation must end, everybody knows where the solution lies, and the Minsk Group countries must put pressure on Armenia to stop violating international law. Turkey remains in full solidarity with Azerbaijan.”⁵²

Turkish Minister of Defense said, “The biggest obstacle to peace and stability in the Caucuses is the hostile stance of Armenia and it must immediately turn back from this hostility that will send the region into fire”. He added that Turkey would support Baku with “all its resources”.

Spokesperson of the Turkish Foreign Ministry answered a question on the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan as follows:

“We learnt that Armenian Armed Forces launched an intense shelling with heavy arms on Azerbaijani army, in Kapanlı village of Tartar district, Çıraklı and Ortakerbent villages of Aghdam district, Alhanlı and Şükürbeyli villages of Aghdam district and Çocukmercanlı village of Cebrayıl district in violation of the ceasefire along the contact line.

We strongly condemn the Armenian attacks which constitute a clear violation of international law and caused civilian casualties. With these attacks, Armenia once again displayed that it is the biggest obstacle to peace and stability in the region.

51 “‘Defend your future’: Erdogan calls on ordinary Armenians to stand against their government as clashes with Azerbaijan continue”, *RT*, September 27, 2020, <https://www.rt.com/news/501847-erdogan-armenia-catastrophe-azerbaijan-conflict/>

52 Andrew Kramer, “Fighting Between Armenia and Azerbaijan Risks Drawing in Bigger Powers”, *The New York Times*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/28/world/asia/azerbaijan-armenia-nagorno-karabakh.html>

Azerbaijan will surely use its right of self defence to protect its people and its territorial integrity. In this vein, Turkey fully supports Azerbaijan with unwavering solidarity. We will stand by Azerbaijan whichever way it prefers.

We call on the international community also to stand by the righteous party.

Hereby, we wish Allah’s mercy upon Azerbaijani martyrs who lost their lives, wish a speedy recovery to the wounded and convey our condolences to the brotherly Azerbaijan.”⁵³

Four political parties of the five represented in the Turkish Grand National Assembly issued the following Joint Declaration on 28 September:

“As the political parties that have groups in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, we strongly condemn the attacks of Armenian armed forces on September 28, 2020 by means of violating the international law and ceasefire in Upper Karabakh, hence targeting civil residential areas and soldiers of Azerbaijan by using heavy weapons.

This latest attack has showed once again that after the attacks on Tovruz, Armenia is the greatest obstacle to establishing permanent peace and stability in the region.

We support Azerbaijan’s acts of defense in order to protect its citizens and to establish its territorial integrity within the framework of its right of self defence that generates from the international law.

Upper Karabakh has been occupied by Armenia for almost 30 years. We reiterate our support to a peaceful solution in line with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in order to end this unjust occupation. We invite the international community to stand by Azerbaijan who has been suffering to date due to Armenia’s occupation and irresponsible attacks.

On this occasion, the political parties in our veteran Assembly, we wish Allah’s mercy on our martyred Azerbaijani brothers and quick recovery

53 “QA-94, 27 September 2020, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Armenian Attacks on Azerbaijan Which Started This Morning”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, September 27, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-94_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-a-karsi-baslattigi-saldiri-hk-sc.en.mfa

for the veterans; we convey our condolences to our brother Azerbaijan and strongly reemphasize our nation's will of solidarity.”⁵⁴

Foreign Minister of Armenia sent a letter to the UN Secretary General on 29 September in which he expressed his deep concern over Turkey's unconditional unilateral support to Azerbaijan.

Armenian Ministry of Defense alleged officially on 29 September that a Turkish Airforce jet entered its airspace from Azerbaijan and shot down an Armenian warplane, which proved out to be fake. Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not far beyond in producing fake information. It claimed that “according to credible sources, Turkey is recruiting and transporting foreign terrorist fighters to Azerbaijan”. This accusation was persistently repeated, identifying those supposed recruitments as pro-Turkish Syrian rebels affiliated with jihadi groups. The insinuation behind this ‘ingenious’ claim, no doubt, was to compliment the call on Christian audience to come to their assistance. It found some resonance, most overtly with the President of France.

The propaganda warfare against Turkey was multifaceted. One line was to provoke the Armenian community of Turkey, full-fledged Turkish citizens, by depicting that pro-Azerbaijan demonstrations in Istanbul were targeting them. Another was reporting that Georgia was allowing passage of Syrian militants and weapons from Turkey to Azerbaijan. Georgian authorities immediately and categorically denied such reports and called on the Armenian side not to rely on such misinformation and fake news.

Desperately seeking arguments to gear up pressure by the West on Turkey, Prime Minister Pashinyan, in an interview to a German daily that was also aired by the *Public Radio of Armenia* on 4 October, stretched the limits of reality, saying, inter alia, “I want to emphasize that in my opinion, Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia are at the forefront of civilization today. If the international community fails to consider the situation accurately, Europe will have to see Turkey before Vienna”. In an interview with a French press agency, this time he said on 6 October, that the escalating conflict was a “war against terrorism”. This was complimented with the allegation that Turkey had involved itself in the conflict as part of its “policy of Armenian genocide”.

In an interview he gave to a Russian press agency, he tried to provoke the sensitivities of Russia with the following words:

54 “TBMM’de Dört Siyasi Partiden Ermenistan’a Kınama”, *TBMM Meclis Haber*, 28 Eylül 2020, https://meclishaber.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/haber_portal.aciklama?p1=149410 (Turkish version), https://meclishaber.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/dosya.getir?pDosyaAdi=439697BC9C2CD432A87E48AD4817C1FC_1.jpg (English version)

“Of course. Answering your first question, I said that it is very possible to pay attention to the goals that Turkey has in this process. I am convinced that Turkey has returned to the South Caucasus after the well-known events of the early 20th century to continue its policy of Armenian genocide in the South Caucasus. It is very clear that this is a pragmatic goal for Turkey. Not an emotional, but a pragmatic goal, because the Armenians of the South Caucasus are the last obstacle for Turkey to move north, east and east, as I am convinced that this is a continuation of Turkey’s imperial policy. And everything that is happening in the South Caucasus must be viewed in the context of the policy pursued by Turkey in the Mediterranean, Libya, Syria, Iraq.

I have already said that this process has already gone beyond the local Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and now there is a shift. Turkey wants to transform the South Caucasus, more specifically, to take control of the entire South Caucasus, to make it its platform to the north, east and south-east for further expansion. I think that in this situation the national security interests of many countries are already specifically affected, including, first of all, the Russian Federation. I did not accidentally mention the information coming from Chechnya or Dagestan. Where did these militants come from in Chechnya and Dagestan, the Syrian militants? It is obvious to me that they were there from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. And the question is, is it a coincidence? Or a planned action to destabilize the North Caucasus to divert Russia’s attention from the current events in the South Caucasus, more specifically in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone? This is a very important nuance that should be appreciated in Russia.”⁵⁵

On October 2, Turkish President reiterated, at a public gathering in Konya, Turkey’s full support for Azerbaijan. He said, “Turkey stands with and will continue to stand with friendly and brotherly Azerbaijan with all our means and all our heart”.

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the following statement on 4 October as the second largest city of Azerbaijan, Ganja with its 330,000 population was shelled indiscriminately by Armenian forces.

“Armenia’s attacks today, targeting the civilian population in Ganja, the second largest city of Azerbaijan, are a new manifestation of Armenia’s disregard of law. We condemn these attacks. Facing defeat in the Azerbaijani territories it occupied, Armenia attacks the civilian settlements beyond the regions that are scene of armed confrontations

55 “Aliyev and Pashinyan mark ‘red lines’ in interviews with RIA Novosti”, *OC Media*, October 16, 2020, <https://oc-media.org/aliyev-and-pashinyan-mark-red-lines-in-interviews-with-ria-novosti/>

because of its occupation, in violation of all principles of humanitarian law, first and foremost the Geneva Conventions. These attacks are an indication of the desperation of Armenia and that it will not shy away from committing crimes against humanity in order to continue its illegal occupation. As we have said since the beginning, Armenia is the biggest obstacle to peace and stability in the region.

We support the stance of the Azerbaijani administration which has announced that it will not respond to Armenia's provocations, that it is exercising its right of self-defense arising from international law within its internationally recognized borders and that it is making every possible effort to prevent harm to the civilian population."⁵⁶

A second statement on the Armenian aggression against Ganja was made public on 11 October following the violation of truce of 10 October. The statement reads:

"We strongly condemn the rocket attacks of Armenia on Ganja, second largest city of Azerbaijan, early in the morning today in violation of the humanitarian ceasefire.

This attack, which we learnt that hit an apartment building in Ganja 100 kilometers away from the conflict zone, caused nine civilian deaths and wounded 39 others, is the latest example of the provocations of Armenian administration to widen the conflict outside of the Azerbaijani territories under occupation.

At the same time, this attack once again shows that Armenia does not shy away from violating international humanitarian law for continuing its illegitimate occupation and does not understand the meaning of ceasefire.

The aggressive actions of Armenia are not surprising and constitute a clear manifestation of its well-known occupying and offensive mentality. It is time for the international community to say stop to this lawlessness.

We wish God's mercy upon the Azerbaijani martyrs who lost their lives, speedy recovery to the wounded and convey our condolences to the brotherly Azerbaijan. Turkey stands with Azerbaijan as always."⁵⁷

56 "No: 228, 4 October 2020, Press Release Regarding Armenia's Attacks on Ganja City of Azerbaijan", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, October 4, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-228_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-in-gence-kentine-saldirilari-hk.en.mfa

57 "No: 241, 11 October 2020, Press Release Regarding Armenia's Attacks on Ganja", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, October 11, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-241_-ermenistan-in-gence-ye-saldirisi-hk.en.mfa

Armenian President made a public call on 4 October on the Armenian Diaspora worldwide, noting that a powerful and strong diaspora is a genuine army, pleaded for their solidarity and unity in response to “Azerbaijan’s and Turkey’s jointly unleashed war” at the borders of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. On 7 October, in an interview he gave to an international American TV channel, unbecoming of his status and in breach of propriety, he claimed that “Turkey wants to carry out another genocide”. The following line was more ludicrous: “We have a sort of partnership with NATO and a NATO member is intervening”.

In another interview he gave to a British daily on 16 October, he said the following:

“I would like to see more pressure from all of our friends, including Russia, on Azerbaijan. But I would like to see much more pressure from everybody on Turkey. Turkey is the key negative factor in this conflict. The moment you take Turkey out, I assure you the war will stop in a day or two. Turkey remaining will make matters worse by sucking others in. It will be disastrous. We will end up with a huge conflict in the Caucasus that could be much worse even than Syria. Excluding Turkey is the key to peace. All international pressure—including from the UK government, from prime minister Boris Johnson—has to be directed at Turkey with the message that it has to get out of this conflict.”⁵⁸

On 15 October Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued yet another statement on Armenian aggression to the civilian population of Azerbaijan, this time on the town of Terter. The statement reads as follows:

“We strongly condemn the continuing attacks of Armenia on civilian settlements in Azerbaijan. As a result of Armenia’s latest attack on Terter today, three civilians lost their lives and five others were wounded while they were attending a funeral ceremony.

Armenia continues to disregard the humanitarian ceasefire declared on 10 October for the exchange of prisoners of war and bodies of the dead. Showing no traits of humanity, Armenia does not even let our Azerbaijani brothers lay their beloveds to rest.

With this latest attack, Armenia once again demonstrated to the whole world its total disrespect for humanitarian values and laws.

Turkey stands with brotherly Azerbaijan in full and eternal solidarity.”⁵⁹

58 “‘Excluding Turkey is key to peace in Caucasus’ – Armenian President tells The Critic”, *ArmenPress*, October 16, 2020, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1031761.html>

59 “No: 246, 15 October 2020, Press Release Regarding Armenia’s Attacks on Terter City of Azerbaijan”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, October 15, 2020, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-246-ermenistan-tarafindan-azerbaycan-in-terter-sehrine-saldirisi-hk.en.mfa>

Armenian aggression on Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan was the subject of another statement of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16 October. It reads as follows:

“We strongly condemn the rocket attack launched by Armenia from the occupied Qubadli district targeting Ordubadh district in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan.

We observe that Armenia becomes more aggressive each day as it faces defeat in the Azerbaijani territories under its occupation. The attacks on the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, with which we share a common border, are a new and dangerous manifestation of Armenia’s attempts to broaden the conflict beyond the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Armenia must abandon these reckless provocations.

Violating the humanitarian ceasefire, Armenia commits war crimes and aims to shift the conflict to another dimension. Armenia should calculate well the consequences of such aggressive actions.

Our solidarity with brotherly Azerbaijan and our Azerbaijani brothers and sisters is always steadfast.”⁶⁰

On 17 October, Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia announced plans to ban the import of all Turkish goods in response to Turkey’s military support for Azerbaijan. According to the government data he cited, Armenia imported 268 million dollars’ worth of Turkish manufactured products last year.

Armenian press could not overlook the passing away of Markar Esayan on October 16, a parliamentarian of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and a member of the Turkish Armenian community, who was laid to rest following a ceremony in the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul that was attended by the President of Turkey.

On 26 October, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson made the following comment on the violation of the latest ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan in reply to a question:

“The ceasefires declared on October 10 and October 18 after the clashes that started following the attack of Armenia against Azerbaijan, were breached by Armenia in a short time. Lastly, as a result of the initiatives of the USA, today a ceasefire was declared again for the exchange of

60 “No: 248, 16 October 2020, Press Release Regarding the Armenian Attack on the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, October 16, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_248_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-in-nahcivan-ozerk-cumhuriyeti-ne-saldirisi-hk.en.mfa

prisoners of war and remains of soldiers. Unfortunately, this last ceasefire was also violated by Armenia within minutes, and Armenia continued its attacks against both the Azerbaijani positions on the front line and civilian targets deep in Azerbaijan far from the conflict zone.

For the efforts of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to yield concrete results, we deem it necessary that they take into account the violations of Armenia and initiate a result-oriented negotiation process aiming at a lasting solution in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions and international law. We believe only then the declared ceasefires would become sustainable.”⁶¹

On 28 October, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned again a renewed attack by Armenian forces to the civilian population of Azerbaijan with the following statement:

“After yesterday’s heinous attack, Armenia perpetrated yet another vicious and treacherous attack on civilians in the Azerbaijani city of Barda, outside the conflict zone. According to initial reports, 21 people lost their lives and more than 70 were wounded as a result of the attack.

We wish Allah’s mercy upon our brothers and sisters who lost their lives, a speedy recovery to the wounded, and convey our condolences and wishes of fortitude to brotherly Azerbaijan.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms Armenia’s vile attacks directed against the civilian population including children, the young and the elderly without discrimination. This vicious policy Armenia employs to terrorize and murder civilians is another manifestation of the sick mindset that was behind the Khojaly massacre.

The Armenian administration, resorting to any means available to avoid withdrawing from the territories it occupied, acts without reason and conscience. This latest attack is registered as a shameful entry in the list of Armenia’s war crimes for which it will be held accountable.

It is long overdue for the international community, particularly for the Minsk Group Co-chairs, to show the necessary reaction to Armenia.”⁶²

61 “QA-106, 26 October 2020, Statement of the Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, to a Question Regarding the Ceasefire Declared Today Between Azerbaijan and Armenia and Its Violation”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, October 26, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-106_-azerbaycan-ve-ermenistan-arasinda-bugun-ilan-edilen-ateskes-ve-ihlali-hk-sc.en.mfa

62 “No: 261, 28 October 2020, Press Release Regarding Armenia’s Anew Attack Today on Barda City of Azerbaijan”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, October 28, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-261_-ermenistan-nin-berde-ye-bugun-tekrar-duzenlenen-saldiri-hk.en.mfa

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