


CONTROVERSY RAGES RE FOREIGN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS


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Category: [Opinions](#)



The issue of foreign language schools opening up in Armenia is getting hot, writes Rouben Galichian from Yerevan. Such schools would teach their entire curriculum in a non-Armenian language. A bill to authorise this development has been submitted to parliament. Examples of the passion that have arisen and its controversial nature follow at the end of this email. 

The issue of foreign language schools opening up in Armenia is getting hot, writes Rouben Galichian from Yerevan. Such schools would teach their entire curriculum in a non-Armenian language. A bill to authorise this development has been submitted to parliament. Examples of the passion that have arisen and its controversial nature follow at the end of this email. 

In Armenia the population thinks that Diaspora does not show any concern and is very passive in this matter. All those who share these concerns need to move and move quickly. It is suggested that all organisation and private individuals in the UK as well as worldwide write to the Minister of Diaspora and the Prime Minister expressing their concern over this matter.

The following draft can be used as a guideline:

Open Letter to the Ministry of Diaspora and the Government of Armenia

The Diaspora Armenians are worried about the recent developments regarding the establishment of foreign language schools in Armenia, where all the subjects will be taught in a foreign language.

This contradicts with the Article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, which says that the official language of the country is Armenian. Yet the Minister of Education and Science has the audacity to propose this anti-constitutional step and yet no one in the ruling party seems to oppose it.

During the Soviet rule, Armenia managed to maintain the official status of the Armenian language but the independent Republic of Armenia seems not to care about this most important element of maintaining national tradition and culture.

Many Armenians, who during the Soviet era studied in the Russian schools, lack the basic knowledge of Armenian culture and still carry on speaking Russian. Continuation of this trend is the Russian language broadcast programs that fill a large portion of supposedly Armenian television programs.

We fully appreciate the importance of good knowledge of Russian language in Armenia but by the same token, it is also important for all Armenians to speak another European language as well. Do we want to limit our overseas contacts to the former CIS countries only? Do we want another political union detrimental to our identity?

Armenia has established the Ministry of Diaspora, whose sole aim is to promote and improve the relationship amongst Armenia and the Diaspora communities. This proposal will further draw these

two sections of Armenians apart, by weakening the most important link, the Armenian language.

We, the Diaspora Armenians condemn this proposal and see it as a step towards creating a rift amongst our communities and more importantly, beginning of the alienation of the people of Armenia from their own culture.

(name of organisation, city, country) June 2010.

Recent Articles in the Armenian Press

Language is a Matter of Security: Arkady Karapetyan

08.06.10

One of the reasons of the uprising in Karabakh was that the Armenians wanted to speak and to listen to Armenian in their daily life, said former commander of Karabakh's self-defense forces Arkady Karapetyan, who has also joined We are Against Opening the Foreign-Language Schools initiative.

"It can be said that one of the reasons of initiating the movement in Karabakh was that we wanted to speak Armenian, to listen to Armenian, we wanted the radio to be in Armenian, the TV to be in Armenian, that there was an Armenian culture, and there is no culture without language," Karapetyan told a press conference today.

What worries the former commander is the re-opening of foreign-language schools as he is sure that the language is directly linked to a country's national security.

"It is a big problem in our army, for example. In what language will the orders be given and done. That is to say, if half of the army does not speak Armenian, and the other half does not speak Russian, then how will they fight, how they will understand each other?" said Karapetyan.

According to him the draft on foreign-language schools will have very bad consequences, should it be adopted.

"Whether it is done on purpose or not, it is wrong, and a mistake should be corrected," said Karapetyan.

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Armenia Ends There, Where Armenian is Not Spoken: Khzmalyan

07.06.10

Armenia ends there, where the Armenian language is not spoken, Armenian film director Tigran Khzmalyan told Tert.am as he participated in a protest organized "We are Against the Opening of Foreign-Language Schools" near the Government Building today.

The parliament is set to discuss today a government-backed draft included already in the parliament agenda. If approved, it will pave the way for the re-opening of foreign-language schools.

"I think that the authorities are trying to deprive us of our freedoms and independence step by step, of course without a good will. They are paying with our future, our dignity and with independence in this case, as Armenia is there, where Armenian is not spoken. The Armenians may live in other countries, due to the rise and falls of our history, and it creates a unique safety, may be that is worth speaking about, but Armenia ends there, where Armenian is not spoken," said Khzmalyan.

"That is to say, this is an encroachment on anything that was fought for, for what our boys sacrificed their lives, for what we were dreaming of in '88. We consider this as a betrayal in face of the nation," said he, adding that they will not allow this to be implemented.

Activists Protest Against Re-Opening Foreign-Language Schools

Tert.am

07.06.10

"We are Against the Opening of Foreign-Language Schools" civil initiative held a rally this morning in front of the sessions hall in the Government Building as the National Assembly was preparing for its last four-day session of this season when it will among other issues discuss also the government-backed draft to make amendments to the "Law about Public Education."

If approved that bill will make it possible the re-opening of foreign-language schools in Armenia.

Earlier on Friday NA Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport had given its consent to include it in this coming parliamentary four-day agenda.

The protesters held posters that read "Language is Not Property Instead of Debt," "In Favor? Then Get Out of Here," "We Require Ashotyan's Resignation," "Only Armenian Can Compete with Armenian."

Later they handed the package of their proposals to MPs as they were entering the session hall. Some even welcomed the MPs with exclamations.

Interestingly, the police did not hinder the protesters' actions but rather urged on them to keep the hall entry free.

The organizers, in turn, distributed to the MPs their 4-point requirements, including those about leaving out the draft from the parliamentary agenda, holding hearings over it, and the issue to what extent is it expedient that Armen Ashotyan remain in office as Armenia's Minister of Education and Science.

