ROWDY PROTESTERS ABUSE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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Category: Opinions

Mr. Vicken Darakdjian is an independent non-affiliated community activist, engaged in Canadian affairs, participant in the Artsakh 44-day war and supporter of the National Legion in RoA. He was a former candidate for membership in the federal parliament of Canada. He is married and lives in Laval, Quebec.

Vicken Darakdjian, Laval, Quebec, 25 May 2022

Dear reader,

In any democratic country peaceful protests are legal and healthy for the citizens to express their views. However, what is taking place in Republic of Armenia (RoA) is far beyond peaceful expression. The protesters are led primarily by oligarchs who were formerly in power; they are followed by their friends, and are allied by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). They use all sorts of means to denigrate the authorities that legally came to power a year ago; furthermore, they employ a variety of tactics to deny the government a normal working environment to function properly and paralyze the country. Their singular goal is to bring down the prime minister and the government with the illusory expectation of replacing them.

In all democratic countries the leaders are subject to criticism and ridicule, but in RoA the worst imaginable words and curses are broadcast through loudspeakers against the prime minister and his wife. Dippers are thrown on government buildings. Protesters verbally abuse the police, and the female participants spit on them.

Blocking streets and avenues for weeks on has become common occurrence. Provoking the police force through physical confrontation, occasionally women slapping the police and abusing a tragic accident as a ploy to further inflame emotions and instigate violence is in the protesters' playbook. It is not far fetched to think that the protest leaders assume that radical acts by the police will serve their diabolic plan to blame the authorities and propagate the idea that there is no freedom and democracy.

A good percentage of participants in the protests are women and youth of incredibly early age. Traditionally the police have respected them and refrained from arrests or other forms of retaliation. Organizers view this as a loophole and abuse it to their advantage. If they are detained, they are in custody for three to four hours and then they are released; they are back in the streets to rejoin the protests. They have no fear of consequences.



In desperation, the organizers use any means possible to further their goal. They have involved the parents of the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) 44-day war victims to gain popular sympathy for a movement which serves the oligarchs. Manipulating the parents and recruiting them for the protests is an ignoble tactic and a despicable act. To shame the organizers for this deed is less than adequate. Wasn't it the oligarchs who plundered the country? Wasn't their negligence of the security of the country an important factor in losing the war?

It is already one month that the protesters have been in the streets and avenues of Yerevan, gathered at various squares, raised a tent-camp. They shouted slogans in support of Artsakh and against an alleged plan of a sell-out of lands to the enemies by the authorities. Now they have shifted gears. They fulminate about oligarchy, freedom of speech and democracy, and formation of a "national consensus temporary government". It is not even a comic situation. Do the protesters realize that the oligarchs are not only behind this movement, but they are also in their midst and active participants marching in front lines? Are they cognizant that without freedom of speech and democracy they could not have staged the demonstrations, and they could not have uttered obscene statements and slogans?

I have not seen a civilized country where peaceful protesters are allowed to verbally abuse or even argue with the police authorities, let alone spit on them and physically confront them without serious

penalties and other consequences including imprisonment. After all, freedom of speech and expression of political views has certain limits. Allow me, humbly, to make minor suggestions to the authorities in RoA.

- It should be illegal for youngsters below a certain age -- determined by independent non-affiliated educators -- to participate in politically motivated protests.
- Citizens who physically or verbally harass the police force should face penalties.
- Women should be treated equally as men when they break the law.
- Instead of detaining and later releasing **unlawfully** acting protesters, they should be fined for breaking the law; upon second and third occurrence they should face harsher penalties or even jail time.
- Finally, blocking streets and avenues should be banned to allow normal function for the rest of the citizenry.

Latest news indicate that this movement has lost steam. It does not necessarily mean that in contrast to these protesters all other citizens are in favour of the present authorities. In the unlikely scenario that the movement abides by the law, gains momentum by civilized and peaceful means, and lets the parliament and the government function normally, then a critical mass might have a chance to bring down the government either by truly mass protests, a snap election or regular elections following the end of the term of the present duly elected authorities. Let the country function normally; let democracy take root; let change come through democratically accepted means, not by force or sabotaging the national assembly. If this obstructionist path continues and it escalates into violence, then a civil war cannot be excluded. Think a moment, who gains? Not the country, only and only the enemies benefit; they are ready to exploit any opportunity to further strangle not only Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) but also RoA. God help us!



Regarding the impact of the protests on my immediate community in Canada, I venture to point out a couple of observations and make my remarks. Irresponsible individuals, particularly from ARF leadership and all its branches, organize protests, meetings, propagate in schools and brainwash children as young as 10 years old with slogans against the authorities in RoA. They inculcate them to use unbecoming words addressed at the prime minister. I express my disgust against these ongoing actions.

Please, have a look at the above picture. All are students at a tender impressionable age except one, who is assumed to be the teacher. The photo is taken at a demonstration in front of the Embassy of Republic of Armenia in Ottawa, Canada. Check the posters. In the background the word դաւաճան (traitor) is prominently displayed. What is the message imparted to the young generation? Don't we realize that we create confusion in the minds of these youngsters who hardly understand anything about politics? They can not even yet grasp history, the significance of Vartan Mamigonian and Vasag Syuni. Through such acts they may get less interested in the homeland and have less desire to visit it be of some support, let alone start a new life there where "tavajans" are the rulers. Isn't it that country for which we collectively worked extremely hard?

During my participation in the 44-days war, I had very unpleasant experiences, but this treatment of youngsters in Canada tops it all. What sort of short-sighted leadership we have who let our youth lose faith in their homeland? Aren't these the leaders who should inspire us to love and support our homeland? Shame on them. For God's sake, when will we come to our senses and think of one purpose only? That is, support our homeland without any personal or factional interests.

Homeland is greater than us, because without a homeland we have no identity.

God be with us; long live our homeland.

With respect,

Vicken Darakdjian

Comments



Vicken Darakdjian – 2022-05-31 15:35:23

I want everyone to know that I'm not defending Pashinyan; all I'm talking about is democratic rights and where to draw the line. We all are witnessing the ongoing in Yerevan since 24th of February. If you listen to the slogans and the speeches they are all about demanding our PM's resignation and nothing more, no political agenda. In regards to the lost territories, it is very difficult to accept, especially to all the soldiers who fought to liberate Artsakh and defended it for 30 years, so sad to talk about this topic with all the martyrs that we had at the end to give it back. On the other hand, unfortunately, I learned that no matter who would have been the PM the outcome would have been the same. I'm sure you have seen the famous video clip of our first President who presented the Kocharian's document in front of thousands of people about the deal between Azerbaijan and him. Furthermore, when a journalist asked the former foreign minister Mr. Oskanian about the 5+2 territories he bluntly without any hesitation said sooner or later we would have returned those territories to Azerbaijan, all because the west and the world was looking at us as the aggressors. We had the chance to minimize the losses when we were in the driving seat in late nineties and 2000-2015 and negotiate for lesser damage In the article I was talking about a few issues that the protesters were abusing and using the Artzakh flag, the martyrs' parents, and in diaspora they were involving the very young kids in politics and teaching them slogans against our governments and our PM, which is very wrong. And finally, my point is that we have a democratically elected government by the people with a majority popular vote. We all agree that the votes were not for Pashinyan's popularity but against all the oligarchs that people were so tired of. Now we have a government which can't function normally without the opposition and all the sabotage; if we continue this path we are doomed to fail and that's all about the opposition's agenda. I leave it up to the readers to judge whether to continue like this (a handicapped) government for another 4 years or make another revolution and topple a recently elected government by the people and face the chance of a civil war, or accept the election defeat and work as a decent opposition like a civilized nation to build a prosperous country. My question is why can't the opposition work with the elected government and build the trust of the people and have a good chance to win the next election? Isn't it like that in Canada where parties present programs, get popularity and win elections? With respect, Vicken Darakdjian



Houry Ellezian – 2022-05-31 15:20:39

100% agreed with the article. Using children in political agendas and propaganda, is a red flag for me. Let me remind you of the time when the "opposition" revolted against the prime minister while visiting Syunik, I saw a shocking video where the children of a few hooligans, firmly stepped over the prime minister's photos under their feet a few times and cursed loudly, in very bad language, mimicking the grown-ups, without really understanding why! They made a lot of noise about the village of Shournoukh, and about how the boundary was cutting the village in half. Later all residents of Shournoukh voted for the present prime minister, knowing perfectly well on whose watch it happened. Long story short, a lot of what the "opposition" is staging is evident for the citizens of Armenia, but not SO for the diaspora, who are being played by their false propaganda. To the citizens of Armenia, they know who is what, and why they do what they do. Quite much the effect of "Ստախօս Միհրան", the boy who cries wolf all the time, so that when it is real, nobody believes him and, in this case, are even disgusted with him.



Kevork Papazian – 2022-05-31 14:18:08

Dear Mr. Vic Apparently, after 75 years of life in this world, I am misinformed and don't have any knowledge about the current situation in my country. If I were young, I would have gone and fought, and defended the homeland, same as hundreds of patriotic Diaspora Armenians did in the first and second Artsakh wars; many of them sacrificed their lives. The prime minister of Armenia in a speech last month said that the Armenian Genocide issue and the Armenian Cause concerns the Diaspora Armenians only, meaning it does not concern Armenia proper! Are we to agree with that statement? No one wants bloodshed. In 2018 when Pashinyan, with his supporters, were walking towards Yerevan and Republic Square, did they face this type of police brutality and excessive force? (I am not a supporter of Serge Sarkissian). Using children and women as human shields is not true. These people are fed up with this government. Loss of War, loss of territories, loss of Shushi and Hadrut, loss of the lives of 5000 young precious Armenian soldiers, 15000 wounded and partly amputated soldiers and volunteers and their families. The parents of soldiers and volunteers who are still in azeri jails being abused, the families of Armenian soldiers whose locations are unknown, laying on the ground. These people are angry and frustrated. To belittle these people by accusing them that they take bribes of 5 or 15 dollars or hide under the skirts of the women is not acceptable. This is my opinion. Thank you



Vic – 2022-05-30 23:43:40
Dear Mr. Papazian, I am sorry to tell you that you are misinformed and none of the remarks you mention have anything to do with reality except about the communist Russian army. Mr. Darakdjian Vicken is one of the few Armenians who left their families and went to the front lines to fight and defend our homeland, whereas others were plotting to gain power by throwing away a lawfully elected government and targeting the elected PM, Mr. Pashinyan. As a matter a fact, real Tashnagtzagan party members are against whatever is happening in our homeland. In the meantime, let me remind you that whoever is leading the opposition in Armenia is planning for a bloodshed with whatever it takes. Using children and women as human shields is not the way. They know well that the police have no intention to hurt any women or youngsters. But, let me assure you that it is not going to end up in favour of the protesters, because bribed protesters who got 3,000 or even 10,000 drams, as time goes on will flee and hide under the skirts of the same women that have been on the streets. Meanwhile, let me comment that Mr. Darakdjian is not alone.



Kevork George Papazian – 2022-05-30 10:52:17
My following comments are for Keghart management only. The author of the article is not an independent no affiliated activist. All the subjects and videos posted in the Facebook page are anti demonstrators, anti opposition parties and anti previous officials. Any author has the right to express his or her ideas or opinions but you should not present his as an independent, because that's not an accurate description. Thank you



Kevork George Papazian – 2022-05-30 10:19:00
I disagree with the content of this article. The demonstrators are not the remnants of the oligarchs. ARF is not the remnants of, it is a 131 years old patriotic political party who was in power during the independent Armenian Republic 1918-1921 (including the February uprising against the Communist regime). It was the so called Armenian Bolsheviks who with the full support of Russian communists marched towards Yerevan to topple the legitimately elected Armenian government. The Turkish soldiers were on the border ready to attack Armenian and the Bolsheviks on the other side. The Armenian government could not fight in both fronts any more, so they had no choice but to surrender power to the Bolsheviks. Most Diaspora Armenians, especially in the middle East, kept their Armenian identify and language. We fought for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and fought for the Armenian Cause with demonstration before and especially after 1965. While Armenia was under Soviet rule, the Diaspora was the spokesperson of our rights. What has the current government done to strengthen the links between Armenia and Diaspora? They cancelled the Diaspora Ministry and replaced it by an office as if the 8 Million Armenians living in Diaspora are not important. What positive message did we get? Divisions, lack of accountability, lack of transparency.



Krikor – 2022-05-30 04:55:59
Art, Seems you are imitating the practice on Facebook -- hurling names and allegations without foundation. Incidentally, it's a trade perfected in Yerevan. Where did you get the idea that Mr. Vicken Darakdjian is preaching peace at all cost? Have you read his article? Just show any one sentence that backs your statement. Please, do not throw stones simply because you don't like the facts enumerated in his article, namely protesters using unlawful means to instigate violence and to that effect making use of children, women and parents of martyrs. Krikor



Art Hagopian – 2022-05-29 21:06:54
Our experience shows monumental contradictions. You fought in the 44 day war, and now you are willing to give peace at any price. You are a disciple of Neville Chamberlain! PEACE IN OUR TIME.



H – 2022-05-27 18:09:26
Thousands of police? So what happened to Mr Nikol Pashinysn who walked from Gyumri to Yerevan like a free man because he believed in democracy and believed the whole Armenian population had faith in his promises for a better Armenia and Artsakh?



Vahe Hayrikian – 2022-05-26 19:29:16
Please provide us with an alternative solutions to replace the current non-functional failed government policy when you have a Pashinyan who is protected by thousand of police.



H – 2022-05-25 13:57:11
While you make sense about what shouldn't be done by protestors, backed by oligarchs and/or others, coming from an ազգայինն who has fought during the 44 day attack on Armenians, and lands, you make no reference to the core reason of the protests, nor the ongoing loss of Armenian lands. Your critical thoughts are helpful. Any hopeful and useful foresight?



Vrage Dilanchian – 2022-05-25 08:59:41
Well said.