

WHILE CSTO SITS ON THE FENCE

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"War is a cowardly escape from the problems of peace."

Thomas Mann

Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Los Angeles, 3 October 2020

Unprovoked, on September 27, 2020, Azerbaijani forces launched air- and missile-attacks along the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) border. Emboldened by Turkey's backing, the aggressor also targeted Vardenis, a town in Armenia. Later, they launched drones to drop bombs on Abovian city. In other words, Azerbaijani forces bombed and shelled Armenia proper as well as Artsakh border towns, including Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh.

The criminal attacks on civilians of Stepanakert and towns across the Armenian border testify to the genocidal intent of Azerbaijan and Turkey towards the Armenian nation. While Armenian soldiers are bravely defending their homeland, they can use international assistance and, especially rescue response from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

CSTO, the Moscow-led organization, akin to NATO, was established in 2002 as a security alliance of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The main mission of the union is to come to the rescue of any member subjected to aggression from external forces. It is very simple: Azerbaijan and Turkey are the "external aggressors" against Armenia and Artsakh. Therefore, CSTO should intervene in on behalf of Armenia.

Armenia is facing the deadly aggression of Azerbaijan and Turkey. When will the CSTO come to the rescue of Armenia? Azerbaijan is committing crime of aggression; not only is the aggression against the Armenian forces, but also against the innocent civilians of Armenia and Artsakh. The shelling of Stepanagert has continued for the sixth day since the start of Azerbaijan's aggression.

On the fifth day of the conflict Azerbaijan launched four Israeli-made drones. The drones aimed the Armenia's province (marz) of Kotayk and dropped bombs on the city of Abovian, which is 18 miles north of Yerevan. One woman was killed.

While it is gratifying to hear that the Armenian forces have made inroads into the Armenian Shahumian district under Azerbaijani control now, we need to get all the help we can muster since Azerbaijan has been deploying Jihadist mercenaries against us.

While Armenian civilians are crammed in shelters, the CSTO sits on the fence. Is CSTO waiting to help with the funeral of so many citizens of one of its members or is it that aggression is not a sufficient cause to flex the CSTO muscles?

Let us briefly review what constitutes a *crime of aggression*: "A crime of aggression is a specific type of crime where a person plans, initiates, or executes an act of aggression using state military force that violates the Charter of the United Nations. The act is judged as a violation based on its character, gravity, and scale." Interestingly enough, the definition of a "crime of aggression" also aptly

defines President Aliyev's outlandish behavior without a shadow of doubt.

While the CSTO sits on the fence, the crime of aggression continues by Azerbaijan. What further reasons does CSTO need before it moves into action to protect one of their beleaguered and badgered members?

However, one Armenian soldier saved is worth more than all the gold in the world. Ideas have changed the world, ideas will also advance Armenia. We need to think of ways to reduce the loss of our soldiers and safeguard our decades-old free and independent Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Unfortunately, we do not have a single organization to represent the whole Armenian Diaspora and to coordinate all the efforts to help our soldiers fighting for the freedom and independence of Artsakh. Let us do with what we have in terms of leadership. Here are some ideas to explore:

The Armenian Diaspora should express urgency to get external assistance to make our soldiers' burden less onerous and to help them make inroads into Armenian lands currently under Azerbaijani control. Since we are attacked by Azerbaijan, in self-defense we should also capture Utik province, where the oil, gas, and the railroad corridor lies. It is Azerbaijan's economy's soft belly. Timing is everything and so we should seize the opportunity now.

We could use a larger buffer zone to keep the enemy at bay so our border villagers can sleep better at night. Not a day passes without an expectation of Azerbaijani aggression. Territory captured from the enemy could later be used as a negotiation piece for compromising for the sake of peace settlement.

The Armenian Diaspora has to begin to mobilize toward helping the homeland in substantial ways: fundraising to finance the war; financially helping the families of the fallen soldiers; sending medical supplies and blankets; motivating volunteers to serve the homeland during the war; contacting various state officials of friendly countries to condemn Azerbaijan's and Turkey's criminal intentions.

The officials of Armenia may be too proud to ask for help from CSTO. Perhaps, Russia is playing the dangerous tactic of delaying its entry into the fray to see if Armenia will emerge victorious. Such a game would be too costly; Armenia would lose too many precious soldiers for they are deployed over an extensive and a long so-called line of contact to defend.

To keep neutrality as a member of the Minsk group for peace mediation, Russia could recuse itself from CSTO participation and let any one of the other members of CSTO take over. Issuing a warning to cease the aggression against Armenia's sovereignty and the wanton shelling of the Armenian civilian targets may go a long way to deter Azerbaijan from further attacks. The CSTO silence is tantamount to a breach of duty toward its members facing aggression.

Another idea is for the Armenian Diaspora to send a letter to Vladimir Putin requesting him to fulfill the provisions of the CSTO collective agreement and to help break the brazen Azerbaijani military storm over the Armenian people.

Armenian Diaspora is needed more than ever to support their brothers and sisters in Armenia and Artsakh against the two genocidal countries surrounding them.

In addition to financial assistance, the Armenian Diaspora needs to make a huge effort to enlist the help of CSTO to help Armenia and Artsakh during these difficult times when our soldiers are defending a wide border of Armenia and Artsakh against Azerbaijani violence --plus genocidal Turkey's sworn allegiance to help Azerbaijan in any way it wants.

Armenians in the U.S. and in Canada should draft an urgent letter to President Putin to act immediately before the aggression causes further civilian casualties. The main argument should center on the concept of the crime of aggression, which applies to Azerbaijan's treatment of the Armenians in Armenia and Artsakh. Additionally, we should organize Diaspora Armenians to expedite their assistance to our Homeland, Hayastan.

There are no comments yet.