

OVERDUE REMEDIES FOR REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA – ARTSAKH – DIASPORA RELATIONSHIP MALADIES

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One of the most complex issues that Armenians face since 1991 is the relationship between the newly independent Republic, Artsakh and the Armenian Diaspora communities. Although, over the past three decades volumes have been filled with opinions and treatises about it, implementing recommendations was not given the necessary attention. Proper communication and appropriate protocols were left unattended and consequently in many respects it is in disarray. In recent years, the situation has become further complicated because of the 2020 war and the ongoing political crisis.

In the current context, one of the expressions of this unhealthy relationship between RoA and some major Diaspora elements is that they do not perceive the other as an equal and complementary partner in the struggle for national causes; rather, they treat each other as subordinate and inferior. A second manifestation is the confusion in the roles of each of the three components: RoA – Artsakh - Diaspora. Each of these has a major role to play in defending the Armenian national interests; these roles are complementary, and one is not subordinate to the other or in competing mode against the other. Mutual trust and perpetual discussions between stakeholders might ameliorate the situation.

The principal RoA governmental bodies which deal with the Diaspora, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Higher Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs should play their respective roles professionally and make sure not to fall in the pitfalls of arrogance. Meddling in the internal affairs of the Diaspora communities, which has been noted every now and then, should be avoided at all costs. More importantly, these governmental bodies must show higher sensitivity towards the Diaspora communities by learning about their history, diversities, complexities, and their rich identity constructs. In addition to communicating with traditional "political" parties, professional associations, individual experts in a variety of fields should be consulted with.

Some political parties of RoA seek support in the Diaspora for their political agendas. Donations and expressions of solidarity are natural but crossing the line and engaging in organizational activities opens the door to animus, dysfunction and an atmosphere of mistrust within individual Diaspora communities. RoA and Artsakh are in dire need for every single diplomatic and foreign political support be it Armenian or foreign. Any positive effort is crucial during this existential crisis that Armenians face on what remains of their historical homeland. Shaming the Armenian authorities on foreign lands such as in the United States, Canada and France will only discourage foreign activists, politicians and diplomats from enthusiastically supporting the RoA and Artsakh. Furthermore, the internal dichotomies, hatred and political animosities that have become part of the political culture in RoA should not be transferred to the Diaspora communities. Such attitudes will only demoralize the Diaspora and add to its age-old challenges to mobilize its members and engage them in preserving the Armenian identity and advocating for the Armenian causes. Moreover, RoA political parties will gain nothing through exporting their internal debates and divisions.

Diaspora organizations and activists must remain immune from the severe internal dichotomies of RoA. More importantly, they must refuse to be mobilized on behalf of any internal political agenda. The central duty of the Armenian Diaspora communities is to advocate for the Armenian Cause, support the statehood of the RoA and demand the right for self-determination of the people of Artsakh. Any divergence from these areas will only serve the interests of the enemies. It's up to the citizens living in RoA and Artsakh to find ways to resolve their internal crisis. This approach is dictated by our unique history, geography, size of the remaining population and land. These are not normal times. It would have been a different matter if we were not in an existential crisis, in agony. We cannot afford to have a diaspora opposition like other large nations whose citizens have not been subjected to Genocide and they have the luxury to play opposition politics whichever way or wherever.

The RoA – Artsakh – Diaspora relationship is in shambles. This complex issue needs to be tackled without further delay. It is recommended that each party stays immune from the maladies of the other two; secondly, support each other without political preconditions; thirdly, work on understanding the individual sensitivities and realities and take actions based on that knowledge rather than be driven by sentiments.

Comments



Harut Sassounian – 2021-12-11 05:26:57

A group of us from different countries have formed a non-profit organization to form the Diaspora Armenian Parliament through democratic elections in every Armenian community. Please check our website: HyID.org



Ara Sarafian – 2021-12-10 14:33:43

I suggest you look at the latest of our publications, a serious work on the relationship between Armenia and the diaspora. See Vahagn Vardanyan, "National Identity, Diaspora, and Space of Belonging: An Armenian Perspective," London : Gomidas Institute, 2021, viii + 266 pp., maps, photos, tables, ISBN 978-1-909382-69-5. I'd be happy to send you a review copy.