NCWA ACCUSES TURKISH AUTHORITIES OF PAN-TURKISM

Posted on June 7, 2016 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

Staff, 6 June 2016

Paris/Yerevan—At its inception in 2011, a core aim of the National Congress of Western Armenians (NCWA) was to start a dialogue and eventually discussion with Turkey and Turkish civil society regarding the rights of Western Armenians. Although the dialogue with civil society organizations intensified and became more frequent in recent years, in May 2016 the NCWA announced that it had ceased to pursue at this stage the process of dialogue with the Ankara authorities.

The organization cited several reasons for its decision not to hold discussions with Ankara. Chief among the reasons is Turkey's recent violent hostilities towards Kurds, Alevis, Syriacs, Yezidis and other non-Turkish people living in Turkey. Turkey's obvious backing of Azeri aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia in the four-day war in early April is another reason for the break-up of talks, said the Paris-based group. The NCWA added that official Ankara was an "accomplice and made inflammatory statements, and it's also possible it took part" in the Azeri attack.

Another reason for ceasing the dialogue, said the NCWA, was Turkey's ignoring of the memorandum the 4th Congress of Western Armenians (convened in Paris in early March 2015) sent to Ankara at the conclusion of that gathering. The memorandum outlined comprehensive reasons towards the resumption of talks about Western Armenians' rights. Other reasons for the cessation of the dialogue was Erdogan regime's adoption of a policy of pan-Turkism, violation of international law, interference in the internal affairs of a third country, and its aims to restore a totalitarian regime in Turkey.

Arakadz Akhoyan of Armenia, a long-time NCWA member who has made numerous trips to Turkey in recent years in pursuit of exchange of views with local Turkish authorities (Kars, Van, Diyarbakir etc.) and civil society, announced the cessation of such talks.

April and May were busy months for the NCWA as it held its regular session on April 25 in Yerevan which was followed, on April 26, by a meeting of NCWA with Hranush Hagopian, Armenia's minster of Diaspora. At the regular session the NCWA council considered policy, financial and organizational matters including the report of the chair concerning the activities of the NCWA since the 4th Congress of Western Armenians in Paris.

During the April 26 meeting with Minister Hagopian, NCWA chair Souren Seryadarian, Roberto Malkhassian of Argentine, and Luciana Minassian exchanged views on the steps ahead concerning legal approaches related to the rights and claims of the descendants of Armenians of the Ottoman Empire.

On May 2 the NCWA took part in "Europe of Diaspora" conference in Brussels. The gathering was a European Union project held in the European Parliament to promote a better understanding of

diasporas, to address issues in common and to exchange best practices. The conference emphasized the establishment of a network of European Diasporas, particularly Armenian, Assyrian, Jewish and Roma diasporas in Europe. NCWA chair Seraydarian requested the organizers at the conference to raise issues related to the need to "create practical and down-to-earth follow-up action."

At the initiative of the NCWA a series of meetings were held, from May 24 to 28, with representatives of Syriac associations in Belgium and Germany, the Zaza Cultural Association in Germany and the organizations of the Conference of European Armenians in Germany. A delegation of the NCWA also held constructive exchange of views with the representatives of the People's Democratic Party of Turkey (HDP) in Brussels. The purpose of these consultations was to brief those organizations on the activities of the NCWA and to stress the need for a coordinated approach of persecuted, deported and massacred ethnic and religious minorities of Asia Minor including the Armenians, Assyrians, Zazas, Yezidis, Pontic Greeks, Alevis, Muslim Armenians and Kurds living in Turkey as well as around the world. The coordinated approach would address the aspirations in the restoration of justice and the right to live in a democratic, common homeland in freedom, security, dignity and respect of their human and cultural rights, including the right for restitution or compensation for the private and public property they lost and to put an end to ethnic and religious discrimination. The gathering will consider holding a forum about the rights of Asia Minor minorities by the end of the year.

Finally, on May 27, Akhoyan attended the All-Greek Federations Conference in Larisa, Greece. The topic of the conference was Pontic Greek, Armenian, and Assyrian Genocides by the Ottoman Empire. Akhoyan addressed the gathering and talked about the creation of a league of Asia Minor minorities to combat Turkish extreme nationalism.

On June 3 NCWA representatives met Turkish lawyers in Yerevan to review a draft legal document prepared by NCWA lawyers for accuracy and compatibility with prevailing Turkish laws and relevant provisions of the Turkish Constitution.