

# **The views of Armenian and Azerbaijani Political Parties on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and conflict resolution process**

This study was conducted by LINKS in the framework of the European Partnership for the peaceful settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh

# **UNION OF NATIONAL SELF DETERMINATION PARTY**



The Union for National Self-Determination Party was established in 1987 as an underground organization, and is led by Paruyr Hayrikyan (Party Chairman) who has held the position since the party's inception.  
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# Union for National Self-Determination Party

ARMENIA

**The position of the Union for National Self-Determination Party (UNSDP) on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and peace process, based on an interview with the Chairman of the UNSDP, Paruyr Hayrikyan held in Yerevan on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010.**

## ■ Position on Nagorno-Karabakh and its future

In 1988 the party made an appeal for the creation of the two nation-states of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and for the main goal of these new states to become free and democratic countries. This was highly provocative towards the Soviet Union, and as a result the Chairman was arrested and deported to Ethiopia. The party's main position on the conflict is that it was created by Moscow from the very beginning. In the present however the party believes that conflict resolution must follow democratic principles, and that the people should participate in the decision making processes as this will facilitate finding a solution to the conflict.

The party considers its name as outlining clearly its position as one seeking the right to national self-determination in the region. The party's commitment to self-determination is not only limited to Nagorno-Karabakh however. It considers it the main principle of all international relations, maintaining that there is no principle of territorial integrity without the right to self-determination and to sustain territorial integrity, territories must first be established by employing the right of self-determination. Furthermore, the principle of territorial integrity is established to sustain stability and security in international relations, but there cannot be any security if human rights are not respected and protected. Territorial integrity should therefore not take precedence over human rights. This is the core belief of the party and is illustrated in all its statements and declarations.

The party was actively involved in the hostilities of 1989-1994. The Armenian national hero Movses Gorgsyan, killed in 1990, was one of the five founders of the UNSDP. The Chairman was a commander in the Lachin corridor (from 1992), and was nominated as a prefect by the National Assembly and the President with the task of establishing refugee camps. During

this time more than 50 of the members of the UNSDP were killed while defending the refugees.

The party however believes that it is not good for political parties to be involved in armed hostilities, and therefore although the members of the party that participated were volunteers, they were not armed combatants but were there to build refugee settlements. Before the war the Chairman was good friends with the Azeri foreign minister, as they were both members of a Coordinating Center that included all democratic movements under the Soviet Union, and as a result of their friendship many hostages captured during the fighting were released. However when he became a commander in Lachin this relationship ended, as he became actively involved in the conflict.

Although the party has many veterans within its membership, it holds no special relations with veteran organizations. In 1988 the party established a charity organization (as a sister organization to the party) which worked in Nagorno-Karabakh for a number of years, however today the party does not enjoy special relations with organisations and parties, the authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh or refugees from the conflict.

## ■ Position on the peace process and international involvement

The party has always claimed that the internationalization of the issue is good for the conflict, and is therefore very positive towards the OSCE Minsk process. The party has maintained this position as it believes that in cases where a conflict becomes internationalized, international law is given a bigger role to play in the conflict resolution. Furthermore, in the absence of international involvement, if the conflict was to be resolved internally, national interests overrule international law.

Regarding the Madrid principles, the party believes that as they do not distinguish between the principles of international law and international agreement, they cannot be supported. The party also objects to the principles of the invariability of borders, arguing that if this was maintained in the cases of Kosovo and Germany they would not have been established and reunified respectively. The party also does not recognize the legitimacy of the borders established by the Soviet Union, drawing parallels between those drawn in the region by Josef Stalin as the same as the so-called borders of Europe drawn by Adolf Hitler. The party moreover points to the borders of the region drawn by the League of Nations in 1920, as a historical precedent which enjoyed greater consensus.

Regarding the involvement of other international actors, the party believes that the region should move towards EU integration and greater integration with Western countries.

The party furthermore believes in the exclusion of any kind of role for Turkey and Russia in the conflict settlement, since they were directly involved in the conflict - Turkey as an ally to Azerbaijan and Russia as supplying weapons to all parties in the conflict (Armenia,

Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh). The party does not consider Russia as a friend of Armenia, as it has supplied weapons to Azerbaijan which it may use in a future conflict.

The party however is very supportive of the European approach towards the conflict which it considers very comprehensive, having taken into consideration all the aspects of the conflict. The party has maintained for some 15 years the position that the integration of Armenia and Azerbaijan into the EU would make the conflict senseless, and therefore believes it should be pursued as a lasting solution to the conflict.

The party does not hold a position on the involvement of Iran.

## ■ On people to people contacts and civil society activity

The party believes that neither Armenian nor Azerbaijani NGOs have a role to play in the conflict. The party also maintains that track-two diplomacy regarding the conflict is ineffectual, and argues that this is something recognised internally by NGOs conducting it. The party believes that the only means to resolving the conflict is a political solution.

The party however concedes that unofficial people to people contacts may have a positive role to play in terms of lowering the amount of hatred between the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan and their perceptions of one another as enemies. The party considers this activity as particularly important as new generations are being brought up with ingrained hatred towards one other, and these activities can play a big role in undermining that hatred. NGOs have an important role therefore to play in stimulating informal contacts and bringing the two nations closer together.

Regarding the free movement of people, the party has maintained for many years that even if the conflict is ongoing all the borders, including the borders with the Nakhijevan autonomous republic, must be reopened. The party believes that all kinds of cross-border interaction should be stimulated, including free movements of people but also free trade in order to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The party however remains pessimistic, and considers such a border regime as unworkable, since both administrations in Armenia and Azerbaijan are still very hostile towards one another, with several political leaders in both countries still not recognizing that they cannot change their neighbours and must therefore learn to live together.

## ■ Other information

The UNSDP contested the parliamentary elections in 1990, 1995 and 1999 and claims to

have 4000 members of which around 60% are men and 40% women. It currently has no members of parliament.