



APRIL-2021

# ANALYSIS

## THE OUTCOME OF THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR: CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE DIASPORA AND THE ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT

The trilateral agreement signed by the heads of state of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on November 10, 2020 caused a growing discontent both among the citizens of Armenia and among representatives of the diaspora. The Armenian people were divided into several camps: those accusing the West of inaction; those accusing Russia of betrayal; and, finally, those accusing the current government of both betrayal and unpreparedness for military action.

It should be noted that diaspora organizations did not openly criticize Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in their statements at first, blaming Azerbaijan and its ally Turkey for everything. One of the first to speak out against the current administration was the Union of Armenians of Russia (UAR), led by its chairman Ara Abramyan. The situation was further aggravated by the spread of unfounded information about the government misappropriating the funds raised by the Hayastan Foundation during the war. As a result, representatives of the diaspora began to demand the resignation of the present administration.

As noted above, one of the first large diaspora organizations to blame the current Armenian government was the Union of Armenians of Russia. Immediately after the signing of said agreement, the UAR held an online meeting of 50 heads of its regional offices, led by its chairman A. Abramyan<sup>[1]</sup>, and on November 11, the organization issued a statement on behalf of the chairman, accusing Prime Minister Pashinyan of “incapacity and inability to run the country effectively.”<sup>[2]</sup> Russian businessman of Armenian origin Samvel Karapetyan, as well as entrepreneurs Artak Tovmasyan and Ruben Vardanyan, also joined these appeals. The reason was that these persons had sent financial aid to the government during the war. Thus, representatives of the diaspora assumed that they had done a lot for the development of the Armenian economy, and Artak Tovmasyan, calling for the resignation of N. Pashinyan, announced that he intended to create “his own political force.”<sup>[3]</sup>

President of Armenia Armen Sargsyan was also criticized, despite him claiming that he had learned about the signing of the trilateral agreement on the cessation of hostilities from the media and “had no part in the negotiations” in principle. During his visit to Moscow, the Armenian President had an extremely unpleasant meeting with some representatives of the diaspora. A. Sargsyan was also accused of betrayal, as well as of maintaining a neutral position in the issue of condemning former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan.<sup>[4]</sup>

Representatives of the radical ARF Dashnaktsutyun party abroad, which used to sympathize with the present administration, also opposed the government of Armenia. Party members blamed the

government for the current situation and expressed support to the ARF in Armenia.<sup>[5]</sup> Representatives of the party also criticized the “anti-national policy of the government serving the Azerbaijani-Turkish interests”, and in April 2021, the Yerevan office of the party took the opportunity to announce that the party would participate in the early parliamentary elections to be held on June 20, 2021.<sup>[6]</sup>

Another 15 diaspora organizations, including the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), joined the calls for N. Pashinyan’s resignation. In their address, representatives of the organization called on the Prime Minister to leave office of his own free will, while pointing out that the new government should not be associated with either the current or the past authorities.<sup>[7]</sup>

Diaspora representatives also accused the government of embezzling the funds raised by the Hayastan Foundation during the war. According to various information disseminated in the media, the authorities appropriated almost the entire amount allocated by the foundation, although no evidence of this was found.<sup>[8]</sup> The accusations affected representatives of the foundation as well.<sup>[9]</sup>

The discontent of the Armenian diaspora was building up further because of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s visit to Moscow on January 11, 2021 and his scheduled meeting with President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. On January 8, Chairman of the Union of Armenians of Russia Ara Abramyan sent another open letter to the Prime Minister, in which he accused him of “abusing the people’s trust” and stated that Pashinyan had “no right to sign any documents”. On the same day, representatives of Armenian organizations in Russia met with the leadership of the UAR. At the meeting, representatives of the Union called on members of the diaspora to “voice their opinion” by signing a special statement in front of the Armenian Embassy in Russia on the day of the Prime Minister’s arrival. In that statement, representatives of the diaspora called on the Prime Minister to resign in order to prevent a deepening of the crisis, as well as to disclose the content of “all oral and written agreements” with the Azerbaijani side and not to sign any documents in the future. As a result, a protest action of the Armenian diaspora took place in front of the Armenian Embassy in Moscow on January 11, 2021. Representatives of the diaspora called on the Prime Minister to immediately resign and refuse to participate in the meeting, while Moscow Armenians, in turn, were sticking offensive posters with the image of Nikol Pashinyan and the caption “Traitor” on the car windows, the walls of buildings and so on.

Members of the bureau of the aforementioned Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARFD) also joined in the active criticism of the government. The organization’s leadership issued a statement urging government officials to “be held accountable” for any document signed by the Prime Minister on November 9.

The position of the Armenian National Committee also became clear from its accusations against the Minister of Foreign Affairs. During a Q&A meeting with government representatives at the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on February 10, 2021, the newly appointed Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazyan said that since the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict had been settled, the border between Turkey and Armenia should be opened. This statement by the Foreign Minister provoked a backlash from the Armenian diaspora. For example, the International Armenian National Committee (ANC International) issued a statement accusing the government of normalizing relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan and of “relinquishing its responsibilities as the guarantor” of the so-called former “regime” established by the Armenians in the Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to representatives of the Armenian diaspora, the Armenian government does not see any other obstacles to establishing cooperation with Turkey than the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. The organization also expressed its dissatisfaction with the Armenian government suddenly finding the issue of international

recognition of the so-called “Armenian genocide”, on the propaganda of which the Armenian diaspora has been working so hard for many years, “unimportant” .[\[10\]](#) This statement is a testimony to the fact that not only are representatives of the diaspora disinclined to see peace established in the region, but they are in fact actively hindering it.

The crushing defeat Armenia suffered in the Second Karabakh War and the signing of the trilateral agreement, which virtually implied the Armenia’s surrender, affected the relationship between the government and the diaspora. While some members of the diaspora blamed Nikol Pashinyan and his populist foreign policy for the defeat, others put the blame for the current situation on the former corrupt political leadership of Armenia. The prospects of opening regional communications and transport lines, especially the borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey, were met by the diaspora with hostility.

It is also noteworthy that representatives of the Armenian diaspora did not draw any conclusions from the war. The Armenian diaspora does not support the establishment of peace in the region and the opening of transport corridors—on the contrary, representatives of the diaspora are doing their best to prevent it. The main reason behind all the accusations against Prime Minister Pashinyan is the fear of the diaspora that the government will establish diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey. The ANC statement makes it clear that any step the government may take towards opening the borders with Turkey or Azerbaijan is perceived by representatives of the diaspora as a “traitorous blow”. This proves once again that representatives of the diaspora are not ready for peace in the region and remain hostile. The Union of Armenians of Russia convenes online meetings at every given opportunity, accusing Nikol Pashinyan of treason and demanding his resignation. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which even decided to run in the parliamentary elections in June 2021, makes similar statements.

In turn, the inability of some countries with the influential Armenian lobby to openly declare their support for Armenia during the 44-day war and the fact that the diaspora does not have as much influence as previously thought have become a source of even greater dissatisfaction, even though this was not expressed overtly.

[\[1\]](#) “A community meeting was held in the Union of Armenians of Russia under the chairmanship of Ara Abramyan” 10.11.2020 <https://bit.ly/2QKgHUb>

[\[2\]](#) “Ara Abramyan to Pashinyan: Stop disgracing the name of the Armenian soldier! Stop shifting the blame! Stop devaluing the citizens of Armenia and the Armenians of the diaspora with your Facebook demagogy!” 11.11.2020 <https://bit.ly/3dHiHFC>

[\[3\]](#) “Influential diaspora Armenians demand Pashinyan’s resignation” 11.12.2020 <https://bit.ly/3eoNA0N>

[\[4\]](#) “You are a traitor, too: the Moscow Armenians answered Armen Sargsyan” 11/28/2020 <https://bit.ly/3dMB5xd>

[\[5\]](#) “Structures of the diaspora also demand Pashinyan’s resignation” 25.11.2020 <https://bit.ly/3dK3qUC>

[\[6\]](#) “Dashnaktsutyun will participate in the early parliamentary elections” 19.04.2021 <https://bit.ly/3erLE7U>

[\[7\]](#) “The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) calls on Pashinyan to resign” 12.12.2020 <https://bit.ly/32L4HV5>

[\[8\]](#) “The funds of the Hayastan Foundation were used to slow down the fall of the dram” 23.01.2021 <https://bit.ly/2S7Kxmn>

[9] “The actions of the government seriously affect the reputation of the Hayastan Foundation”  
16.03.2021 <https://bit.ly/3xow2uu>

[10] “ANC International Criticizes Foreign Minister for Remarks on Turkey”, 11.02.2021,  
<https://bit.ly/2RWkuhJ>

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