
Democracy Needs Protection From Demagogy

By Lilit Poghosyan
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President Robert Kocharyan sums up the lessons of March 1

Yesterday, President ROBERT KOCHARYAN convened a press conference with the purpose of summing up the lessons of March 1 and the results of the emergency measures imposed by the state of emergency

In the estimation of R. Kocharyan, "the regime of the state of emergency made it possible to avoid greater losses and graver consequences, stabilize the situation and strengthen the stabilization process by specific actions." The results are satisfactory, "no violation of the state of emergency was observed during the past 20 days; the Army and the Police demonstrated restraint during their service, and the overwhelming majority of the population approached the situation with understanding. In the present-day condition, all the state agencies work without disruption, and life is returning to its regular course."

Hence, the President sees no reason to extend the regime of the state of emergency, so, as decided previously, the capital city will return to its usual rhythm.

"My goal is to achieve the full stabilization of the situation. It is necessary to make the situation as controllable as it was before the elections. I must transfer the power to the newly elected President in such stable and controllable situation," R. Kocharyan confirmed.

As regards the criminal case instituted in connection with the mass disorders, its inquest is under way. "The approach declared previously is in force. The people who were misled or simply appeared in the scene of action and participated in the disorders will be treated more mildly in case of appearing in the law enforcement agencies voluntarily and assisting the investigative group. The regime of the state of emergency did not envisage additional privileges and rights for the law enforcement agencies, and their activity will continue in the frameworks of the same legislation."

What lessons can be learnt from what happened? "First, democracy needs protection from demagogy. I consider it to be one of the most important lessons. We have carried out large-scale reforms in most different spheres: both in the economic and the state government system, but life showed that it was necessary to strengthen the mechanisms ensuring the security of our citizens and the property belonging to them. The foundations of the statehood should be protected legislatively. Unfortunately, these events made it clear that our legislation does not envisage a number of articles which are enforced in almost all the European countries. For instance, if someone in Germany had appealed to servicemen and police officers not to serve, take sides with the demonstrators and avoid performing their duties, he/she would have been sentenced to 5 years in prison, together with the organizers of the demonstration."

Many countries enforce a much stricter punishment for such kind of people; therefore, considering the international experience, our legislation should be replenished by clear-cut mechanisms protecting the foundations of the state from such encroachments, the President is convinced. It wasn't done up to date because it couldn't have occurred to anyone that "There might be people in Armenia for whom the task of disorganizing the state machine could

become a goal of life. We came in collision with such bitter reality and must draw relevant conclusions thereof. It is necessary to undertake serious legislative steps in that direction."

The next lesson is that "it is necessary to undertake decisive steps to rule out the involvement of some non-governmental organizations in politics.

For instance, 'The Trial of Spirit', a veteran's organization, was almost entirely involved in the post-electoral processes; a lot of members of that organization were active participants of the disorders. It is also well known that a large group of 'Yerkrapah' activists also participated in all that. We cannot now say which organizations had participation and which organizations didn't, but some of them did really take part in the disorders.

Such prospect should be ruled out in future. And no organization should make attempts to turn the events to this or that side, taking itself for a 'joker'. This is an extremely serious danger to the state.

I am sure that it is also necessary to establish a stricter liability for preaching violence, as well as for the steps that may lead to violence," R. Kocharyan stated. The President also added that in this case too, the legislation of the European countries envisages a stricter punishment for the violation of the law.

What steps do the authorities intend to carry out in case the opposition, faithful to its 'promise', celebrates the historic moment of lifting the state of emergency by resuming the massive brainwashing process? "If the demonstrations are not authorized, the Police will be obliged to prevent them immediately. The demonstrations held for 9 days continuously were not prevented by the Police for one reason: I didn't allow them to do that since there was a process of recounting under way, and any abrupt steps might be viewed as an attempt of disrupting the appeals process.

I am sure I did the right thing. If, on the second day of the unauthorized demonstrations, there had been a more abrupt intervention, it's quite possible that we wouldn't be facing such grave consequences now. I am not going to intervene now; on the contrary, I will demand that all the steps deriving from the law be carried out," R. Kocharyan confirmed.

Especially considering that, "People who used arms and explosives against the Police are still under investigation, and there's no guarantee that they will not try to resort to new provocations with the purpose of messing up the situation and avoiding responsibility."

And what's the President's attitude towards the rumors on dissolving the Parliament and appointing new elections? "I am familiar with that opinion. I do not absolutely accept the approach for one simple reason: extraordinary parliamentary elections are appointed in one case, that is, when the Parliament cannot have a political majority and form a government.

We have no such problem. This is just an alphabet in the process of state building and politics in general.

Besides, we are well aware that no election in Armenia has ever led to soothing passions. So, does it make sense to enter into a new cycle which will make the situation more complicated?" R. Kocharyan stated.

The internal and external "demands" on conducting an independent inquiry are no less illogical and incomprehensible. This, however, doesn't mean that the President is against inviting specialists from abroad and conducting a thorough study of the events, first of all, the circumstances of the death cases. What's more, the inquest authority already benefits from the services

of foreign experts. The possibility of setting up a temporary parliamentary committee with the purpose of studying those cases is not ruled out either. But this will be feasible only after the court makes a legal assessment on the events and the activities of the accused.

Anyway, what to do with the 350 thousand electors who voted in favor of LTP, as these people won't admit the election results? What to do to mitigate the continuing tension? In response to this question, the President brought the example of the Western practice, when presidents are elected with an advantage of 1-2 percent of votes, but "nobody makes a tragedy of that, saying 'because 40.9 percent of the people think a different way, it is necessary to change the Constitution, implement systemic changes, dissolve the Parliament' etc. It is a matter of political culture.

Yes, after each election, there will be a large mass of electors that haven't voted in favor of the authorities. We cannot raise the issue every time in order to have the state system changed. In 2003, Stepan Demirtchyan received more votes than L. Ter-Petrosyan - during these elections. Does this mean we have to change the state system?"
