
Azerbaijan Concerned About Possible Opening Of Armenian-Turkish Borders

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Azerbaijan is seriously concerned about a possible opening of borders between Turkey and Armenia on 16 April. The Azerbaijani media and pundits have described trends towards improving ties between Armenia and Turkey differently.

In a comment on a possible opening of the Armenian-Turkish borders in its 5 April edition, the opposition daily Yeni Musavat said that "the official opening of the borders would mean that anyone will no longer think about applying any sanctions on the aggressor. If our strategic partner Turkey becomes an economic partner with the enemy state, which sanction may Azerbaijan demand from the international community against the aggressor?"

Yeni Musavat believes that "it will also mean that Ankara admits the policy, which it has been conducting so far with regard to the aggressor, was wrong and in parallel confirms that Iran's Armenian policy was correct... It's a very positive case that the concern was expressed by the Azerbaijani leadership as well".

The paper recalled recent statements by Azerbaijani Parliament Speaker Oqtay Asadov and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov which opposed he opening of the borders.

"If to take into account news that gas export to Turkey will be suspended, Azerbaijan will refuse Nabucco [gas pipeline to take Central Asian and Caspian gas to Europe bypassing Russia] and further improve ties with Russia, then one can think that the fraternal country's political leadership has been sent fairly clear messages about Azerbaijan's position," Yeni Musavat added.

In an interview with opposition daily Azadliq in its 5-6 April edition, political analyst Zardust Alizada ruled out grounds for concern.

"This reminds me a storm in a teacup. The Turkish-Armenian ties were abnormal and they are trying to normalize these ties. There is no fault here. Every state is trying to normalize its ties with other states... Turkey has rendered us all assistance during the whole period of the [Karabakh] conflict," Alizada said.

He ruled out the impact of normalizing the Armenian-Turkish relations on Azerbaijan's efforts to get Karabakh back.

Political analyst Vafa Quluzada said that Azerbaijan should in no way spoil ties with Turkey.

"This issue raises some doubts. Because the opening of the Armenian-Turkish borders is not a new subject. For some reasons, this issue raised before Obama's visit to Turkey... Borders may be opened. Azerbaijan should not spoil its ties with Turkey for this reason. Because, Azerbaijan would suddenly receive double blows then. Undoubtedly, the opening of the borders is not in our interests. The deterioration of ties with Turkey is not in our interests at all. Azerbaijan should not go to double losses," Quluzada said.

He mentioned Azerbaijan's good relations with Iran and Russia, although these countries closely cooperate with Armenia.

In a comment in Yeni Musavat's 5 April edition on Turkish President Abdullah Gul's denial of reports about the opening of borders, chairman of the Hope Party Iqbal Agazada said that "time will show if this statement is true or not... The latest statement by Gul may also be regarded as the Turkish government's departure from its position on Armenia. In any case, all this will become clear shortly".

Agazada justified President Ilham Aliyev's decision not to attend an Istanbul-hosted forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations as a step "which is not absolutely late", adding that "the current Turkish authorities' attitude to the Azerbaijani government was so insincere that the president had to take the step".

To recap, Baki Xabar and Yeni Musavat papers published a roundup of Turkish media outlets which seriously reacted to Aliyev's absence from the forum.

In an interview with Yeni Musavat's 6 April edition, analyst Qabil Huseynli described Gul's denial as a political manoeuvre. He added that the Azerbaijani leadership's position on the issue made the AKP (ruling Justice and Development Party) change its plans.

"It came out that the AKP government had not given detailed information to Azerbaijan about the essence of secret talks conducted with Armenia and other issues concerning improvement of ties with Armenia. Azerbaijan has obtained information about the real intention of the AKP government at the last moment. Turkey's opposition parties and some foreign media played an important role in this issue," Huseynli said.

In remarks to private Lider TV station on 6 April, EU representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby said that the reopening of the borders would have a positive impact on the region.

Our strategic purpose is to achieve the opening of all borders in the South Caucasus. The situation is not normal in the region. We will continue our work to ensure not only the Armenian-Turkish but also the Georgian-Russian and Azerbaijani-Armenian borders are reopened. This is very important for the region's development and security, Semneby said in Russian with superimposed Azeri translation.
