
Turkish expert: Armenia is integral part of South Caucasus and we have to consider and negotiate with it

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"Not only I call the Azerbaijani authorities partially dictatorial, but also the other political analysts and experts," said the head of the Turkish Center for Strategic Studies of the Caucasus Dr. Hasan Oktay in the interview given to the Azerbaijani portal "Haqqin.az."

Portal notes that Hasan Oktay denies his ties with the elite of Erdogan, however, according to some members of the Nationalist Party of Turkey, he and his Center are very close to the ruling circles.

Hasan Oktay noted that at the international symposium entitled "From the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea - a strategic view" the recent elections in all three South Caucasus countries were discussed. "At the end it came out that the most undemocratic elections were held in Azerbaijan. And no matter how much the authorities of your country repeat that they were held democratically, the international community has a basic opinion which says the opposite," he said.

"Azerbaijan believes that all the problems, including problems with democracy, are the results of unsettled Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijani authorities want to assure the entire world that if tomorrow there are breaks in Azerbaijan then they will be deposed: this is a wrong approach. Such statements are made only by those leaders who do not believe in themselves. Difference between the people and the authorities of Azerbaijan is in this, when your people want more freedom, and the government hinders it," Hasan Oktay said.

The expert noted that between the people and the authorities of Azerbaijan a big gap is formed, and it is observed by everyone in the world. "Someone has to tell about this directly to the official Baku. We do not need new Gaddafis, Assads, Saddam Husseins on the territory of the Turkic world, thus we should always remind the Azerbaijani authorities that the path they have chosen, is incorrect and does not correspond to the interests of the Azerbaijani people, but to their own ones. We really do not want to see the Libyan scenario repeated in Azerbaijan in the future," he said.

Answering the question of how strong do the Azerbaijani authorities hinder the Turkish policy in the Caucasus, Hasan Oktay stated that Ankara carries out a pragmatic policy, and it must, in the end, tell Baku that the latter must come down from the heavens onto the earth and accept the reality. Any step made by Turkey in connection to Armenia and Karabakh, even if it is for the benefit of Baku, causes panic among the Azerbaijani authorities. "Both the authorities and the opposition of Turkey, are in Azerbaijani authorities' trap too, and thus, our entire foreign policy, in fact, is held hostage by Baku. That's how I regard Davutoglu's refusal to visit Yerevan on December 12 and to attend the meeting of BSEC Council (yesterday Davutoglu stated that he would leave for Yerevan "Haqqn.az")," the expert noted.

Oktay is sure that Davutoglu should go to Armenia, as far as it is also in the interests of Azerbaijan. Turkey on its part, is trying to budge the solution of this problem, and the Azerbaijani authorities should not hinder it. Azerbaijan should decide: either to declare firmly of their intention to "liberate" the territory, or to abandon them forever, or else to agree

on the present status quo. "Azerbaijan, however, does not hurry to develop and express its final position on this issue," the expert stated.

Hasan Oktay stressed that at the moment, Turkey carries out its policy fully in accordance with the interests of Baku. "I think this is a wrong approach, as Turkey as a large country, should take the initiative in all matters, and not look back at Baku. And what did we see immediately after the signing of the protocols in Zurich? Prime Minister Erdogan arrived in Baku and delivered to your parliament with a speech stating that Turkey will never take up steps which could harm Azerbaijan. All these recent actions carried out by Turkey serve to preserve the status quo in the region," he noted.

"Whether we like it or not, Armenia is an integral part of the South Caucasus, and we are forced to reckon with its existence. This means that if we want changes then we have to find a way to come to an agreement with it. If we begin to look back at Baku, then everything will remain the same, which is not in the interests of either Azerbaijan or Turkey. Karabakh conflict is one of the most painful problems of the region. Therefore, we, together with Baku must develop a new strategy to resolve this conflict. Either Azerbaijan has to put the international community under pressure and to settle the conflict peacefully, or it has to start a war for the liberation of Karabakh. There is no third way out there," said the expert.

According to Hasan Oktay, Turkey will not open its border with Armenia on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide. The expert recalled statement made by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on May 16, when he stated that the border with Armenia will not be opened until the Karabakh conflict is solved. "But my personal opinion is that Turkey should open the borders," Oktay said.

"We must open the borders unconditionally," the Turkish expert stated, noting that the Armenians "in the first place, have to change their mentality and make peace with Turkey and Azerbaijan."

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