

## The PACE Resolution And Lost Opportunities

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The attitude regarding the fulfillment of the demands put forth by the resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) clearly shows the “principled” level of seriousness inherent in the resolution of political problems and the neutralization of the divide in the society.

Moreover, in reality, the fulfillment of that resolution’s demands doesn’t assume to be a final solution to the issue but simply a precondition for the start of negotiations and the creation of an atmosphere for dialogue. This is the case because the fulfillment of the proposed conditions made by the Council of Europe envisaged an initial stage of negotiations. In other words, at least at this stage, the Council of Europe resolution proposes formulaic resolutions to the existing problems in the country, and not of substance.

And since, given the situation of mutual intolerance, Armenian political forces aren’t able to create such a formula on their own, the PACE resolution remains the only acceptable version at the moment to create it. From this viewpoint, the level of seriousness regarding the resolution becomes the yardstick to gauge just how inclined and interested we are to organize negotiations and the necessary conditions for real dialogue.

Resolution 1609 directly addresses the issue of creating these two specific environments. On the one hand, it concerns the need to initiate a non-partisan and multi-sided investigative inquiry of the events of March 1st. The opposition states that this demand of PACE must take place only with the involvement of international experts. The authorities, on the other hand, have yet to propose a concrete mechanism to fulfill such a task. Furthermore, last week the National Assembly’s Standing Committee on State and Legal Affairs postponed by 30 days the bill proposed by Deputy Victor Dallakyan entitled, “The creation of a temporary committee in the National Assembly to study ways to overcome the domestic political situation created by post election developments in the ROA.” It is interesting to note that this bill isn’t concerned with an investigation of the events of March 1st but rather with an investigation of the possible avenues to remove the consequences resulting from those events. It is difficult to imagine such a process taking place except through social discussions. The exclusion of the bill from the National Assembly’s debate agenda is clearly incomprehensible when viewed in the context of the PACE resolution’s demand to begin political talks, especially since the bill lacked any extreme points.

The second field concerns a change in the staff at the Public TV and Radio Council and the National Committee of TV and Radio. The PACE resolution formulates not only the degree of those changes in a very general manner, but the objectives as well, according to which the independence of public TV and radio must be guaranteed from competing political interests. In addition, “the staff of those bodies must undergo review so that they can be considered truly representative of the Armenian society.” Naturally, this demand of the resolution can

be interpreted in various ways given the conditions of the formulations and the actual inclination to implement the changes involved. It affords the complete possibility to fulfill the demands by creating an imitation solution through cosmetic changes and PACE, when reviewing the fulfillment process, will concentrate solely on the external, visible layer of the changes. However, given the conditions of the existing political state of affairs, a change in the staff of these collegial bodies assumes that they must include representatives of the radical opposition and the PACE resolution specifically discusses such representatives bodies.

The working group created by the directive of the ROA President has already submitted a proposals package to the President that includes suggestions as to how to fulfill this and the other demands as set forth in the PACE resolution. However, for inexplicable reasons, the essence of these proposals hasn’t been made public, in other words it hasn’t been made available for public discourse. It is not yet clear what specific approaches the working group has come up with regarding modifications to the staffs of the Public TV and Radio Council or to the National Committee of TV and Radio.

In essence, the creation of this group must be considered the third segment where the inclination of the parties to enter talks should have been manifested. It should have been regarded as perhaps the initial such possibility taking into account that it is logical to assume that during the stage of drafting proposals it is necessary to insure the inclusion of all political-social interests. Secondly, because it wasn’t a demand of the Council of Europe but rather a solution of domestic expediency as viewed by the ROA President. In this context, two important factors regarding the formulation of the working group stand out. First, by way of presidential directive, the group would include Deputy Ministers of the ROA Foreign Affairs and Justice Ministries, the Deputy Prosecutor General and members of the PACE delegation in Armenia. It is not by accident that no explanation was given why such a formation was chosen when it was already apparent that at most only one representative of the opposition could be included in the structure; the head of the “Heritage” parliamentary faction. Secondly, why was Raffi Hovhannisyanyan’s statement that he couldn’t participate in the working group and his proposal to substitute another representative of “Heritage” in his place, viewed as a refusal on the part of “Heritage” to participate in the workings of the group by the coalition parties? The impression is thus created that it is less important for the coalition to insure the presence of at least this one oppositional force than to specifically guarantee the preservation of the PACE Armenian delegation’s make-up.

In fact, such a formation of the working group dictated this; to implement a closed-off working process leading to conditions in which no civil-political force outside the confines of the coalition knows what has been proposed to the president, to what degree these proposals stem from the situation created and to what extent they can effectively resolve the paramount issues that

## UNICEF And Armenian Postal Service Join Forces To Stamp Out Child Mortality

A new postage stamp, the first of its kind ever issued in Armenia, was launched here yesterday. This stamp will not only get a letter sent to its intended recipient, but will also publicize the issue of neonatal mortality in an effort to reduce infant deaths worldwide.

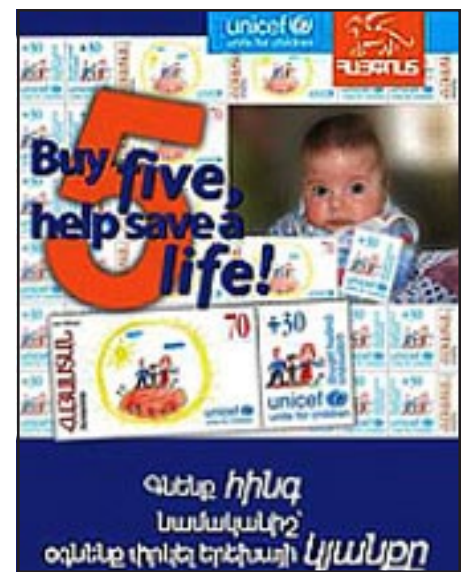
UNICEF will receive \$.10 from the sale of each stamp. A local postal service, HayPost, will provide UNICEF with advertising space in its 900 post offices throughout the country, a crucial element for the success of the campaign.

“We hope that this campaign will attract strong public attention and much-needed additional funds to stamp out the problem of neonatal mortality in Armenia,” said UNICEF Representative in Armenia Sheldon Yett.

The stamp was officially launched in a ceremony in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the participation of high-ranking Armenian officials, representatives of international organizations and children.

Child survival a primary focus UNICEF has been working hard to keep neonatal mortality a primary focus of the Armenian Government and public. By mobilizing its resources and collaborating with various actors in the public and private sectors, the organization is already making gains.

In the past five years, Armenia has shown tangible progress in reducing infant and child mortality rates. But



further reductions are needed, as roughly 21 infants per 1,000 live births die before their first birthday. Most of these deaths occur during the first 28 days of life.

The statistics also mask wide economic disparities. Infant mortality rates in wealthy households are far less than those in poorer households, and Armenia’s rural areas lack the qualified staff and basic equipment needed to provide sufficient antenatal and neonatal care.

“While Armenia has made good progress in meeting Millennium Development Goal 4, which calls for a two-thirds reduction in child mortality by 2015, it is essential that all segments of the population benefit from these improvements in child survival rates,” said Mr. Yett.

## Prominent Member Expelled From Dashnaksutyun Slams ‘Unprincipled’ Leadership

A former leading member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) criticized the current party leadership on Friday, saying that its “unprincipled” stance has enabled former President Levon Ter-Petrosian to emerge as the country’s main opposition force.

Ruben Hakobian was expelled from Dashnaksutyun this week after repeatedly criticizing the government’s conduct of the February 19 presidential election and other policies and calling for fresh national elections. Party sources said he Hakobian violated Dashnaksutyun’s century-old statutes that bar members from publicly challenging decisions taken by the party leadership.

Hakobian, who had joined Dashnaksutyun in 1990 and was at one point its top leader in Armenia, said he is bewildered by the expulsion be-

cause he himself twice requested a mutually amicable termination of his membership. “All this is a little unpleasant,” he told RFE/RL in an interview. “I would like to know why I was expelled.”

Hakobian was subsequently appointed as Armenia’s consul-general in Saint-Petersburg, Russia. He occupied that position until recently.

Hakobian confirmed that he had “serious disagreements” with Dashnaksutyun’s top leaders over the strategy adopted by them before after the presidential election. He singled out the party’s decision to remain part of a government which it criticized during the election campaign.

Hakobian claimed that this stance is “unprincipled” and has only benefited Ter-Petrosian. “I just can’t understand why the opposition field was fully handed to Levon Ter-Petrosian,” he said.

exist. And this when Point 8.1 of the resolution specifies that, “the required status and corresponding rights of the opposition must be guaranteed within the political system.”

The deadline to comply with the demands set forth in the PACE resolution ends in two to three weeks. In the meantime all the authorities have been able to do is come up with a package of proposals. Of course, this also can be offered as evidence of meeting the demands especially if we take into account the new bill presented in the National Assembly regarding the staging of rallies and demonstrations that is considered to

be a “correction of past errors” (This description was given by the “360 Degree” broadcast of May 5, 2008 on Public TV). However the most important question that can be posed regarding the work that has taken place still has no answer. To what degree is the opposition or that segment of society that has adopted an oppositional stance and which has serious problems confiding in the regime, ultimately responsible for making those changes happen.

Of course, of equal importance here is also the position of the opposition. This is a subject that we will cover separately in the future.