# Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR): Roads to Europe Extend across Armenia

## The imperative of joining the civil society institutions in NKR and Armenia

Issues regarding the civil society institutions in Nagorno Karabakh are not surfaced often, probably because those are closely associated with security issues. It seems that whenever any issue is silenced, there is no need to deal with that issue at all. This results in unawareness and indefiniteness, a situation which in turn becomes a tangible challenge to the security of the country. It is difficult to imagine the further development of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic without overcoming the mentioned challenge.

Unfortunately, assistance to the NKR society is often identified with charity. A vicious circle has formed where the NKR cooperation with the Armenian Diaspora and the Republic of Armenia (RA) is imbued with anticipation of charity on one hand, and with the desire to provide charity support on the other. It is high time to hear the question "How can we help?" in parallel with another: "What problems does NKR have?" In the result, the civil society institutions in Armenia and the Diaspora will start spotting the current problems of democratization, human rights and effective governance, and eventually, a demand for cooperation with the NKR civil society will emerge. This is the first step towards impeding the international isolation of NKR. The time has come to build the bridge of cooperation between the civil society institutions in Armenia and NKR, and the pertinent institutions in the European Union.

## Unrecognized, yet independent and integrated

Currently NKR does not participate in the regional and global participation processes. The core of the NKR national security should be participation in the international developments which are in line with the vision the country has adopted. The priorities of the NKR external security should be the development and strengthening of the strategic relations with Armenia, which can serve as a warrant of the safety of the Artsakh population, and of the peaceful and fair regulation of the NKR conflict. Other priories should be the adoption of European integration as a developmental tendency, and the development of the international and regional cooperation. The NKR interests can be defended only through actively engaging in the current international developments, implementing ardent multi- and bilateral and multi-level policies, keeping up an adequate pace with the international processes and providing pertinent feedback. Currently such involvement implies participation in different programmes; establishment of relations with significant international organizations, development of relations with global power centers and countries with key positions in regional developments and finally, participation in integration programmes in Europe and the post-Soviet area.

Nowadays several Armenian NGOs work quite closely with certain European institutions and have good working relations with organizations of the European Union. However, no matter how closely the Armenian institutions may integrate within the European dimension, the integration cannot be

complete unless similar NKR institutions get involved as well. Development of the civil society in Armenia and NKR cannot be partial and segmented.

## In the context of the strategy of the national security

Some of the obvious threats to the national security of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic are the exercise of military power against it and the belligerent policy of Azerbaijan, non-recognition of the NKR status internationally, regional issues, poor quality of the roads, water pumps, communication systems and other infrastructures, epidemics and natural disasters. At the same time there is yet another list of threats that jeopardize the security of the country, namely the insufficient level of integration of NKR-RA public, business and civil society institutions and cooperation between these institutions, marginalization of the NKR from the international cooperation projects, negative demographic trends, challenges of the establishment of the market economy, and finally, financial-budgetary governance and environmental issues. A third set of serious threats to the NKR security are the traditional challenges typical to a transitional period, such as the insufficient level of democratization, faulty system of the human rights protection, shortcomings in the election system, marginalization of the society, insufficiency of the state warrants of social justice, poverty level, access to health, professional education and social services, increasing intolerance in the society and predicaments of the moral-psychological and patriotic upbringing. Therefore, a state policy aiming at the sustainable development of the society should be anchored on two priorities: the prevention of the mentioned threats and elimination of their consequences.

Perhaps a core value and a warrant of the NRK policy on national security is the cooperation between NKR and Armenia. The state institutions both in NKR and Armenia cooperate quite closely in sectors such as governance, legislation, army, etc., and there is a culture of cooperation established between the financial, defence and educational systems of the two countries, whereas the level of cooperation between the civil society institutions is rather low. Perhaps the only exception is the religious organizations. Therefore, promotion of integration of the RA and NKR civil society institutions should become a significant direction in the strategy of the NKR national security.

*The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the discussion "Freedom of Expression and Eastern Partnership", which took place on 22 July, 2010 in Stepanakert, NKR. The roundtable discussion was attended by independent analysts, government officials, and representatives of the international organizations.*

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