THE EU'S POLICY IS STARTING TO OVERLAP WITH PASHINYAN'S STANCE

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This is the English translation of a Turkish language article that was originally published by AVİM on 7 May 2024.

A senior European Union (EU) diplomat stated on April 11th that he would like to see "real, substantive negotiations" between Armenia and Azerbaijan that would lead to a peace agreement, border demarcation, and the opening of transport links.

Toivo Klaar, the EU's special representative for the crisis in the South Caucasus and Georgia, explained to RFE/RL that Azerbaijan and Armenia could move faster in the peace process if the conditions are right. He added that the EU supports the Armenia - Türkiye normalization process and hopes that the special representatives of the two countries will meet again in the near future[1]. Klaar stated "If there is political will and determination, it should not take too long to reach a positive outcome. We want to work together with Azerbaijan and Armenia to move from where we are to a positive outcome". In his meetings with Ruben Rubinyan, Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament and Armenia's special envoy for the normalization of relations between Türkiye and Armenia, and Serdar Kılıç, Türkiye's special envoy, Klaar emphasized that he heard that both sides were keen to make progress on this issue. He added that the EU absolutely supports this and therefore hopes that this process will significantly move forward in the near future and yield results for Türkiye, Armenia and the region.

Turkish and Armenian special representatives held four official meetings on the normalization of relations between Türkiye and Armenia. The last meeting took place in Vienna in July 2022. At this meeting, the parties agreed to open the border between Türkiye and Armenia to third-country nationals as soon as possible. However, the border was opened only once during this period, for trucks carrying humanitarian aid sent by the Armenian government to victims of last year's devastating earthquake in Türkiye.

Klaar added that Brussels supports the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process and hopes that the special envoys appointed by Yerevan and Ankara for normalization talks will meet soon.

These words are in line with the wishes of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Another important development is that Pashinyan, who has a relatively moderate stance towards Türkiye compared to the previous Armenian administration, demanded the disclosure of the identities of the "1.5 million Armenians" claimed by the Armenian fanatics. This demand by Pashinyan and his supporters has caused discomfort among the opposition[2].

Although the statements of EU representative Toivo Klaar and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan are parallel to each other, they are disturbing Armenias political opposition parties, the church and diaspora Armenians. Pashinyan's message on April 24th further fueled the opposition's discontent[3]. His April 24th remarks were described as "full of confusing words reflecting his unstable state of mind" and his use of Meds Yeghern (Great Catastrophe) 11 times instead of "genocide" was met with great disappointment in some quarters.

On April 30th, 2024, *The Armenian Weekly* columnist Harout Sassounian's venomous remarks against Prime Minister Pashinyan and his concern regarding the damage to the "Armenian identity" built on the "genocide" allegations following Pashinyan's "radical change proposals" are clearly visible. Sassounian's concern is not only about Pashinyan's proposals, but also about whether Armenia will "meet Türkiye and Azerbaijan at the same point". This is not a case of reading intentions. Sassounian himself expressed this concern. He has clearly written that he is uncomfortable with the undermining of Armenian identity being based on "regional problems", "enmity" and "genocide"[4].

The keywords "Constitution of Armenia", "Declaration of Independence", "National Anthem of Armenia", "State Coat of Arms of Armenia", "hostility" and "genocide" can and should be analyzed in detail. Because these keywords are important steps to be taken for regional stability and peace efforts. Although not so explicitly stated, Toivo Klaar, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, has also stated that regional development is a desired and expected development. It is worth mentioning in passing that regional cooperation, peace and stability seem to be disturbing some non-regional actors.

*Image: *https://avim.org.tr/tr/Yorum/AB-NIN-POLITIKASI-PASINYAN-IN-TUTUMU-ILE-ORTUSMEYE-BASLADI*

[1] Toivo Klaar hopes Armenia, Turkey special representatives on normalization of bilateral relations will meet soon, *News AM*, news.am, 11 April 2024, https://news.am/eng/news/817273.html.

[2] Pashinyan ally calls to verify number of Armenian genocide victims, *Civil Net*, civil.net, 16 April 2024, https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/772023/pashinyan-ally-calls-to-verify-number-of-armenian-genocide-victims/

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[3] Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyans message on the occasion of the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2024/04/24/Nikol-Pashinyan-April-24/.

[4] Pashinyan Falsely Blames Armenians Problems on Trauma from the 1915 Genocide, *The Armenian Weekly*, 30 April 2024, https://armenianweekly.com/2024/04/30/pashinyan-falsely-blames-armenias-problems-on-trauma-from-the-1915-genocide/.

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To cite this article: ELBİR, Hazel ÇAĞAN. 2026. "THE EU'S POLICY IS STARTING TO OVERLAP WITH PASHINYAN'S STANCE." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2024 / 14. May 15. Accessed November 08, 2026. https://www.avimbulten.org/en/Yorum/THE-EU-S-POLICY-IS-STARTING-TO-OVERLAP-WITH-PASHINYAN-S-STANCE

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