AVİM Commentary • No: 2026 / 3 •

OPPOSITION TO THE ONGOING PEACE PROCESS BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

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This is the English translation of a Turkish language article that was originally published by AVİM on 13 January 2026.

In the context of recent political developments between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the positive statements made by both countries expressing the will to repair relations and the support of these statements received through concrete initiatives can be regarded as a significant turning point. This approach, which seeks to prioritize international economic interests and the welfare of societies, establishes a rational basis for preventing a recurrence of conflict in the future and gives hope that relations between the two countries can follow a more stable and peace-oriented course.

However, this optimistic political atmosphere is not sufficient to completely eliminate the historical legacy of the conflict between the two sides. The confrontations that began during the period of Russian Empire and continued within the borders of the Soviet Union, as well as throughout the independence period, have not only kept the issue at the political level but have also left deep traumatic scars on the collective memory and cultural life of both societies. This traumatic legacy has led to the persistence of nationalistic sentiments and mutual distrust, creating unfavorable conditions that cause peace processes to remain fragile at the societal level. Indeed, recent developments that have taken place parallel to political events clearly demonstrate that achieving lasting peace requires not only diplomatic steps but also addressing the emotional and historical burdens that exist between the peoples on both sides.

This issue once again became visible through an incident that occurred during a Cross-Country Skiing World Cup stage held in Italy on 31 December 2025. Armenian national athlete Mikael Mikaealyan covered the word "Azerbaijan" on his racing suit upon entering the starting area. This was deemed a rule violation by the organizers of the event, as Mikaealyans action negatively altered the visibility of the official sponsor's brand, and the said athlete was thus fined. Following this, the Armenian Ski Federation stated that it welcomed the athlete's stance and would cover the fine. Federation President Gagik Sargsyan questioned Azerbaijan's membership in the federation, claiming that Azerbaijan

lacked a documented history of skiers, coaches, or competitive skiing. He also stated that prior to this decision, the Armenian Ski Federation had submitted an official application to the International Ski Federation (FIS) requesting that Azerbaijan's membership should not be accepted[1].

In contrast, a different picture emerged recently at an international music festival held in Astana. During the festival, an Azerbaijani jury member awarded the highest score to an Armenian participant, drawing attention as an example of positive and constructive interaction between the two sides. Taken together, these two incidents present a telling contrast: while offering an encouraging example for the peace process, they also render the Armenian sides successive official statements in favor of peace □□□□ the practical reflection of these statements on the ground—open to question.

The differing approaches showcases in these two events demonstrate that the Armenian side still bears the traumatic scars of ethnic conflict. Indeed, at a time when positive developments are taking place at the official and international levels, the stance exhibited by an official Armenian institution raises questions about whether the peace process and planned future relations in various fields can progress steadily. At this point, the Armenian state (within the framework of the foreign policy discourse that it supports) needs to take preventive measures, considering that the attitudes of its domestic institutions can also have significant political consequences and contribute to the prolongation of the conflict.

This approach can be regarded as an indication that, despite official statements from Armenia in favor of peace, ethnic animosity persists in the background. Considering the centuries-long historical dimension of the conflict, it is foreseeable that such approaches will continue for some time and that it would be unrealistic to expect the complete elimination of ethnic animosity in the short term. However, the fundamental truth that must not be forgotten is that the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples have constituted the two independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan for more than thirty years now. These two states must conduct their own internal and external policies, stand on their own feet economically, and ensure that their societies adapt to the conditions of the modern world while shielding them from economic and social hardship. Given that this ethnic conflict, which has continued for many years and is still being fueled by some radical groups, does not provide any tangible benefit to the people. It is thus crucial for the Armenian state to monitor and control similar events in the future. At the same time, the aim must be to gradually eliminate the roots of this conflict by raising new generations in the field of education with an understanding focused on humanism and peace rather than hostility. This is a critical necessity for the security of both states and the region as a whole.

[1] Azerbaijans Controversial Inclusion in International Skiing Raises Eyebrows, 9 January 2026, https://armeniansportsnews.com/2026/01/08/azerbaijans-controversial-inclusion-in-international-skiing-raises-eyebrows/

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To cite this article: KHANTAMİROVA, İlaha. 2026. "OPPOSITION TO THE ONGOING PEACE PROCESS BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2026 / 3. January 22. Accessed November 08, 2026. https://www.avimbulten.org/en/Yorum/OPPOSITION-TO-THE-ONGOING-PEACE-PROCESS-BETWEEN-ARMENIA-AND-AZERBAIJAN

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