

ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN TODAY

EVENTS AND COMMENTS

Electronic Bulletin

N 8, 2012

ABOUT THE PROJECT



ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF 'THE OTHER SIDE' BY ARMENIANS AND AZERBAIJANIS THROUGH ALTERNATIVE AND FIRST-HAND INFORMATION

With the support of the British Embassies in Armenia and Azerbaijan Region Research Center (Armenia) and The Institute of Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan) are implementing a project "Enhancing Knowledge and Understanding of 'The Other Side' by Armenians and Azerbaijanis through Alternative and First-Hand Information" (April 2012-April 2014).

In fact, it is a new round of work aimed at improving the knowledge of Armenians and Azerbaijanis about each other.

Public Dialogues is a new website that will be launched soon. There you may find materials referring not only to this stage of the project, but also the outcomes of previous periods. We believe that the site will become a kind of joint platform on the Internet, where readers will be able to obtain reliable information about Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as to draw parallels comparing the present situation in the two countries in various areas of life.

Parallel interviews and video materials for the website "Public Dialogues" are held with experts and specialists from the two countries and reflect the present situation. These dialogues do not necessarily touch upon the issues of the Karabagh conflict or Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, they also raise and discuss problems which are no less important for the two conflicting societies. These parallel interviews are simultaneously published in Armenian newspaper "Aravot" and in Azerbaijani newspaper "NovoyeVremya".

On-Line Discussions: With the help of these Internet discussions Armenian and Azerbaijani political scientists will be given an opportunity for joint discussions on various issues related to the most topical developments in the international life and will help to adjust their assessments and perceptions with the approaches of their counterparts from the opposite party. Our discussions are held according to the rules of correct and comprehensive discussions where the representatives of both sides are involved.

Joint Online Press Conferences: Armenian and Azerbaijani journalists working in various mass media will have a chance to participate in online joint press conferences with Armenian and Azerbaijani professionals and political figures, as well as with political figures and experts from other countries and receive direct answers to the urgent issues they are interested in. Materials based on these conferences will be published in their mass media outlets.

The electronic bulletin "Armenia and Azerbaijan Today: Events and Comments" reflects the results obtained in the process of cooperation of the Research Center "Region" (Armenia) and The Institute of Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan).

Find us in the Internet:
Region Research Center
www.regioncenter.info
www.publicdialogues.info
<http://www.facebook.com/RegionCenter?ref=hl>

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ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN TODAY: EVENTS AND COMMENTS

PARALLELS

THE INTERVIEWS IN ARMENIA ARE CONDUCTED BY REGION RESEARCH CENTER AND
IN AZERBAIJAN BY THE INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

THESE PARALLEL INTERVIEWS ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY PUBLISHED
IN ARMENIAN NEWSPAPER "ARAVOT" AND IN AZERBAIJANI NEWSPAPER "NOVOYEVREMYA"

PRINT MEDIA IN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN: STATE AND PROSPECTS

**YOU ARE FREE TO WRITE WHATEVER YOU WISH,
YET IT WILL HAVE NULL EFFECT**



An interview with **HAKOB AVETIKYAN**,
the editor of the “Azg” newspaper

-How much do newspapers cost in Armenia and how do they sell in the capital and in the provinces? Where are they read more – in the capital or in the provinces?

-Since 1994, newspapers in Armenia have been sold at 100 AMD, except for a few. That is to say the price of newspapers has remained unchanged for 18 years, while everything has changed and has become very expensive in the country. There is no print media market in Armenia; we do not publish by market principles. For example, the cost of a copy of our newspaper currently amounts to 135 AMD, but we sell it at 100 AMD. Under such circumstances the newspaper cannot be considered a business project.

The larger number of newspapers is distributed in the capital and in 2 – 3 larger cities. This is true for all newspapers printed in the capital, with the only exception of the Republic of Armenia that is an official newspaper. No newspaper is distributed beyond GegharkunikMarz. It is interesting to note that some newspapers in Gyumri and Vanadsor have the same circulation as a daily in the capital.

The most surprising and most important thing I see in studies on media outlets is that people get 18% of the information they learn from sources who are their friends, acquaintances and relatives. This means that there is no confidence in media. What the neighbor says is much more trustworthy for them.

-What are the main problems of print periodicals in Armenia?

- The content of newspapers does not go beyond the triangle of the President’s Office, the RA National Assembly and the RA Government. Our newspapers do not cover the society much. The print media is fully free. You can write whatever you wish. Years ago violence was used against journalists, in 2010 – 2011 some editorial offices were sued with an aim to make them go bankrupt, but this has stopped now, too. You are free to write whatever you wish, yet it will have a null effect.

UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE SURVIVAL OF THE PRINT MEDIA IS MERELY IMPOSSIBLE



An Interview with the Chairman of the Journalistic Association
of Azerbaijan “Yeni Nesil”
ARIF ALIYEV

**-How much do newspapers cost in Armenia and how do they sell in the capital and in the provinces?
Where are they read more – in the capital or in the provinces?**

-The newspapers are sold at 40 – 60 gyapiks (39 – 58 Euro cents) in Azerbaijan. There are about 80 regional newspapers, the majority of which are the print outlets of the local executive forces. They are published mainly with a circulation ranging from 500 to 1000 and not more often than twice a month.

All national publications of Azerbaijan (approximately 200) are concentrated in Baku. The only newspaper that is issued 7 times a week is the Yeyni Musavat that has the highest circulation among the socio-political publications in the country (12 thousand copies). There are also 32 newspapers that go into the category of weeklies and are published 5 – 6 times a week. Their circulation ranges from 1000 to 8500 copies a day.

-What are the main problems of print periodicals in Armenia?

-The volume of advertisement of the electronic media is approximately at the same level as it was in 1998, however, the incomes generated from advertisement in print media in this period has decreased by 10 times, making up less than 2 million Manats for the whole of the last year. Large banks and mobile companies dominate in the advertising market. The role of the small and medium-size business is insignificant in the development of the advertising market. Opposition periodicals that have larger circulations practically do not have any advertising. As their management holds, this situation is the result of the high level of corruption and the monopolization in the country as well as the ideological influence the authorities have on the advertising market.

Thus, under these circumstances the survival of the print media without the attraction of resources from outside becomes practically impossible. Independent experts and the executives of some media outlets offer to change these conditions by means of reforms, while the government offers a governmental support in the form of a donation. Things do not come to reforms. Instead, in 2009 the Fund for Government Assistance for Media Development was established under the President of the Azerbaijan Republic. Annually, the Fund allocates an amount from 5 to 100 thousand Manats to 30 – 40 periodicals and journalistic organizations. It also organizes competitions for the best journalistic articles and holds various events. The sum of the assistance in 2009 was 1.3 million Manats, and about 3.4 million Manats has already been allocated into the budget of the Fund for these purposes for the year 2012. Besides, in 2010 the President granted 5 million extra Manats to the Fund for the construction of a dwelling house for journalists.

Full versions of the interviews:

<http://www.publicdialogues.info/en/print-media-in-armenia-and-azerbaijan>

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS IS AT THE SAME LEVEL AS IN OTHER MEDIA



**An interview with producer at Internews Armenia
GEGHAM VARDANYAN**

-Are the citizens free to express themselves in social networks, what is the attitude of the authorities in the country to this phenomenon and in general, how developed is the so-called citizen journalism in Armenia?

- Certainly, people are free to express their opinions. But even in social networks people cannot forget that they are journalists, officials or bank employees. A person, is surely, free to speak out as he/she wants, but one is supposed to bear responsibility for that. That is to say a free statement in social networks is the same as a free statement in traditional media.

In my opinion, the authorities do not control social networks. It is very difficult, since the environment is changing constantly. I assume that the power may be using the social networks in order to find out the moods of the people and the upcoming protests. But this instrument can be used by both the power and the opposition.

-What role do social networks play in the social life in Armenia, in the period of the elections and other socially significant processes?

- Political figures – Ministers, Deputies, heads of administrative regions, the mayor of Yerevan, and the political parties – are getting registered on Facebook social network. In the administrations of these figures a new position is established gradually – an official responsible for spreading information in social networks.

In the 2012 elections we observed a very interesting phenomenon: communication between adversaries in traditional media was very correct and well-balanced, however, the real problems, existing among opposing parties, were reflected on Facebook social network. The adversaries were disseminating caricatures, collages, and posters. A user, named Varpet (Master) Onik, disseminated caricatures on the power. To counterbalance him, another Varpet (Master) came forth who was exercising black PR against the opposition.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AZERBAIJANIS AND ARMENIANS IN SOCIAL NETWORKS LOOKS LIKE A VIRTUAL WAR



An interview with the media expert and the head of the analytical website mediamazar.com AZER NAZAROV

-Are the citizens free to express themselves in social networks, what is the attitude of the authorities in the country to this phenomenon and in general, how developed is the so-called citizen journalism in Armenia?

-In fact there is no such thing as censorship in the social networks in Azerbaijan. At least, it is not stipulated by the law. That is why we can assert that there are no impediments for the freedom of expression and use in social networks. Anyone can express his or her opinion in the course of the discussion on this or that matter.

To substantiate what I said, I can bring the example of the existence of the Facebook profiles of the Ministry of Taxes and other executive authorities on social networks, as well as that of the head of the state. Even if there is such a statement that citizens are intimidated by the Police or the authorities for various expressions on social networks, still we have witnessed no litigation on this matter. As for citizen journalism, there are no grounds to claim that there are no conditions for it in Azerbaijan or that impediments are brought forth for the creation of such conditions.

- Do Armenians and Azerbaijanis communicate in social networks and what is the attitude of the society to such communication?

- Communication between the representatives of the peoples living in the conflict zone looks more like a virtual war and a fight. Unfortunately, in the stead of tolerant discussion on existing problems there is quite a lot of cursing and humiliating expressions, as well as expressions that foment the situation are thrown at one another. We could bring the example of expressions made by either party with regard to Ramil Safarov's extradition and pardon. Besides, it can be seen also from voiceovers in the video clips posted onto Youtube that come with national music and other national nuances.

Full versions of the interviews:

<http://www.publicdialogues.info/en/Virtual-Parallels/Development-of-Social-Networks-in-Armenia-and-Azerbaijan>

VETERANS OF KARABAKH WAR

WE NEED OPPORTUNITIES INSTEAD OF PENSIONS AND BENEFITS



Our interlocutors are the participants of the Karabakh war Zhora Faryan, Hrant Aghabekyan and Norayr Shahbazian. All three of them served in the special Shushi battalion. Zhora Faryan is currently working as chief specialist in "Saranist" company that produces glass containers. Hrant Aghabekyan works as manager of a Yerevan-based company that imports confectionery. During and after the war Norayr Shahbazyan worked by profession - he is a doctor. Since 2004, he has never officially worked anywhere. He is now engaged in farming and private practice.

- How do the participants of the Karabakh war live in Armenia and Karabakh? How do the society and the state treat disabled veterans?

Norayr Shahbazyan - Unfortunately, there was stratification among the veterans after the war – members of the Armenian National Movement, Dashnaks, Republicans, and so on. Thus, these people were divided into insiders and outsiders. Of course, we cannot definitely assert that in Armenia and Karabakh citizen military live absolutely poorly. They all live in different ways. As for me, I should say that I can hardly make both ends meet.

Hrant Aghabekyan. – The differences among the citizen military members came forth back at the time when many went to war with a specific intent: to be in the battlefield for some time, then return to Yerevan and use this fact to obtain positions for career growth. I have come across a few books about the Karabakh war, where the names of people who had spent only a few weeks in the battlefield were mentioned... These are the people who have created their biographies in this way.

Norayr Shahbazyan - By the way, this kind of war participants talk a lot about the war, give interviews. Those who were truly at war do not like talking about it. I can talk about myself and my comrades at this round table, that we create our biographies not at the expense of the war.

Zhora Faryan- How do citizen military live? I am related to this state only as a tax-payer and if I break the law, I go to jail. If we lived poorly during the war or immediately after it, that could be understood. Everyone lived like that! But today there are people who live poorly and very poorly. And it is not normal, it is wrong.

Hrant Aghabekyan - Many of the main participants of the war live very poorly. We have friends who participated in the war and returned disabled, so I'm talking based on their examples. There is, for example, one who lost a leg in the war, he was classified as the 2nd disability group patient, which was later altered to the 3rd group. As if one could assume that during this time his amputated leg could grow. Injustice is everywhere and in all areas.

- What do the fighters in the Karabakh think of the talks on its recommencement? Is it possible and is there a need to resolve the conflict peacefully?

Zhora Faryan - Young people know about the war through the films, and I can see adventure even in this. The war is a misfortune for all, concrete people die in the war. War is the most terrible thing ever, and people should do everything possible to the last second to prevent it.

Norayr Shahbazian. - We have already been struck by this lightning. Do you know what war is? You cannot educate younger generations by the example of mediocre soap operas like the ones, now shown on TV. You should tell the truth about the war. War is for the weak, the strong do not plot wars. The Karabakh war was the weakness of both our own and Azerbaijanis. And this war was begun by neither us nor them. All know that the war was the result of the collapse of the empire. Those who have been through the war, should understand that the two countries are facing a primary task - the creation of a State where literacy and legitimacy reign. I do not care what the President of Azerbaijan did in connection with Safarov's case. But I care for the attitude of the Azerbaijani society: does it glorify or condemn his actions?

For many centuries, military leaders, attacking sleeping people, have never been glorified. Hasn't there been any evolution since then? I want to believe that there are people in Azerbaijan who say, "What are we doing? Who are we making a hero? '.

Hrant Aghabekyan - Every war brings forth lost parents or orphaned children. No one wants this. I firmly believe that if Azerbaijan starts a war, we will stand next to our young soldiers. And since there is no democracy in either state, I am not sure that there will be no war. I'll exclude the possibility of the renewal of the war only if Armenia and Azerbaijan become democratic states with the rule of the law.

HOW DO VETERANS LIVE AND WHAT DO THEY HOPE FOR IN AZERBAIJAN?



An interview with the disabled veterans of the Karabakh war: the Chairman of the Veterans Union ETIMAD ASADOV, Deputy Chairman of the same organization FIRUDIN MAMEDOV, and a member of the Karabakh Liberation Organization Fahraddin Safarov.

- How do the participants of the Karabakh war live in Azerbaijan? How do the society and the state treat disabled veterans?

Etimad Asadov: In Azerbaijan there are 11,306 disabled veterans of the Karabakh war. Of these, 881 qualify for the first group of disabilities, 8194 - the second group, and 2231 - the third group. Despite the fact that the government takes care of the disabled veterans of the Karabakh war, the issued pension is small. It is true that the disabled are given apartments, cars, free treatment and medicines, wheelchairs, orthopedic devices, and are provided with resort-spa treatment and treatment abroad. The attitude of the state and the society is absolutely normal. There are problems with some officials, who sometimes do not respond to the inquiries or requests of the disabled or delay the issuance of decisions on individual issues.

Firudin Mamedov: The social situation of the disabled veterans of the Karabakh war leaves a lot to be desired. The state has allocated 2,500 apartments for people with disabilities. More than five thousand people with disabilities are still waiting for their turn. Public hospitals provide free treatment to people with disabilities, but this does not apply to private clinics. There are laws to ensure the protection of the rights of the disabled, but half of them are not being enforced. The state does not guarantee opportunities for people with disabilities to earn money. As for the society, it is indifferent to the problems of the disabled, very similar to what officials do. In most cases, a disabled person, standing in line, will not be allowed to move forward and what is this if not a

manifestation of indifference. Officials did not solve the problems of the disabled veterans of the Karabakh war, which is just another manifestation of indifference.

Fahraddin Safarov: Despite the fact that all the attributes with regard to the veterans and the disabled of the Karabakh war seem to be met, there are still issues, left outside the scope of the attention of the state and the public. In particular, the Ministry of Defense did not pay attention to the veterans and people with disabilities, as if they are not there at all. That does not do them credit. I am a former teacher; however, the Ministry of Education is also uninterested in ensuring employment for former teachers who have lost their health at the front.

- What do the veterans think of the talks on the recommencement of the war? Are there a possibility and a need to resolve the conflict peacefully?

Etimad Asadov: I think that the opportunities for the peaceful resolution of the conflict are exhausted. As a disabled war veteran, I am still a supporter of the recommencement of hostilities, since the conflict cannot be resolved in any other way. It is impossible to resolve the conflict peacefully because of the position of the Armenian government. Of course, the war is always a tragedy. However, war is inevitable to return of the territories. Dying for one's motherland has always been an honor.

Firudin Mamedov: No sane person wants war. We have experienced the tragedy of war, the loss of friends, loved ones. However, we need to return the lands that are still occupied. We just have to defend ourselves and exercise self-defense. If I am, if necessary, drafted, I will go. As for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, we do not believe in it any more. We must rely only on ourselves.

Fahraddin Safarov: It is simply impossible to solve the problem of the return of the occupied territories without war. We have experienced all the sorrows of the war; however we are ready to fight even today. As for a peaceful resolution, the years-long negotiations showed that peace with Armenia is unattainable through negotiations. Perhaps some other ways and approaches should be found, for example, the help of superpowers to achieve fair peace.

Full versions of the interviews:

<http://www.publicdialogues.info/node/296>

JOINT INTERNET PRESS-CONFERENCES FOR ARMENIAN AND AZERBAIJANI MASS MEDIA



**From the Press-Conference of the Director of Europe Program
at International Crisis Group SABINE FREIZER**

Topic of the interview: Extradition and clemency of Ramil Safarov, the suspension of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Hungary and the possible consequences

- Mr.Safarov was tried and sentenced in a court of law to life imprisonment and though his extradition back to Azerbaijan could be deemed understandable, his amnesty and promotion were not. Relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia are already extremely tense. The Minsk Group negotiations on basic principle document, which is supported by the US, EU and Russia, have for all intents and purposes reached a dead-end. The number of incidents along the line of contact is increasing and June 2012 was the deadliest month in a long time with at least 10 killed soldiers. Azerbaijan doubled its military budget in 2011 and is increasing it again significantly this year, while Armenia also takes steps to strengthen its capabilities. Both in Baku and Yerevan, there is a growing public impression that the time to return to war, to defeat the enemy, permanently has come. Leadership on both sides is threatening to start fighting again and their communities increasingly appear to support this opinion.
- The Safarov pardon, which has been criticized by the US, Russia and the EU, is particularly unnerving, because it sends the message that if something happens to an activist participating in a confidence building meeting, the perpetrator of that crime will be left unpunished. Very few people in Armenia and Azerbaijan have the courage and independence needed to take part in dialogues efforts –this pardon is in effect a direct attack on them and their efforts. Yet confidence building and trust is needed if the Azerbaijani and Armenian leadership are going to find the political will to return to the negotiations table and reach a compromise.
- Both in Baku and Yerevan, there is a growing public impression that the time to return to war, to defeat the enemy, permanently has come. Leadership on both sides is threatening to start fighting again and their communities increasingly appear to support this opinion. I don't think that many in Baku believe anymore that the talks, as they are, will bring a resolution to the conflict.
- A new war, unlikely to be short or quick, but could extend for years and have regional implications, this is not what the South Caucasus needs when the broader region is already in dangerous turmoil. The main victims of this conflict, the 600.000 Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied territories, have a real chance to return to their homes if the basic principles agreement is agreed by the sides, this real opportunity should not be lost for uncertain gains.

The several mass media from Armenia (online newspaper “Hetq” – www.hetq.am, National Radio of Armenia, news agency “News Armenia” – www.newsarmenia.am, internet newspaper “Panorama” – www.panorama.am, internet newspaper “1in.am” – www.1in.am) and from Azerbaijan (newspaper “NovoyeVremya” – www.novoye-vremya.com, news agency “Turan” – www.contact.az, newspaper “Zerkalo” – www.zerkalo.az, newspaper “BizimYol” – www.bizimvol.az) participated in the press-conference of Sabine Freizer.

Full version of the interview:
<http://www.publicdialogues.info/en/online-interview/Sabine-Freizer%20/2012-09-04>



From the Press-Conference of Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment
(USA) THOMAS DE WAAL

Topic of the interview: Extradition and clemency of Ramil Safarov, the suspension of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Hungary and the possible consequences

- There has been no progress since the failure to achieve agreement in Kazan in June 2011. The events of the last week have now dealt the process a deadly blow. I cannot see, at least for the short term, the possibility of Serzh Sarkisian agreeing to negotiate face-to-face with Ilham Aliiev. And there is the danger that the Armenian side will recognize Nagorno Karabakh as an independent state. From my conversations with the US State Department, I understand that they believe that would mark the end of the Minsk Process—there would be nothing left for Baku and Yerevan to negotiate over.
- It is much too easy to blame the Minsk Group format or the co-chairs for the lack of progress on achieving a settlement for the Karabakh conflict. But changing the format will not change the fundamental issue, which is the gap between the conflict sides and their unwillingness to compromise. A mediating team consisting of Richard Holbrooke, Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama could not change that. The two presidents, of Armenia and Azerbaijani, are the conductors of this process and it is they who decide what is acceptable to them and what is not. I can only see this changing if the threat of conflict grows to such an extent that the international players see the need to impose a settlement on Armenia and Azerbaijan, which neither side wants. Those who ask for greater international involvement should be a little conflict about what they ask for: they could get something they do not desire.
- After the pardoning of Ramil Safarov, questions are being asked if it is possible for Armenians and Azerbaijanis to co-exist peacefully. Some Armenians use the episode as proof that there is no way that Armenians of Karabakh can live together with Azerbaijanis again. I would not be in such a hurry to make this kind of conclusion. Armenians and Azerbaijanis live together in Moscow, in Tbilisi, in Iran, in the same villages in Georgia. They can live together in the future in and around Karabakh as well. The important thing is for there to be a trusted and powerful policeman who can provide protection and security. To my mind, that has to be an international policeman.

The several mass media from Armenia (online newspaper “Hetq” – www.hetq.am, National Radio of Armenia, news agency “News Armenia” – www.newsarmenia.am, internet newspaper “Panorama” – www.panorama.am, internet newspaper “1in.am” – www.1in.am) and from Azerbaijan (newspaper “NovoyeVremya” – www.novoye-vremya.com, news agency “Turan” – www.contact.az, newspaper “Zerkalo” – www.zerkalo.az, newspaper “BizimYol” – www.bizimyol.az) participated in the press-conference of Thomas de Waal.

Full version of the interview:
<http://www.publicdialogues.info/en/online-interview/Thomas-de-Waal/2012-09-05>