

Dear all,

Just to let you know that the media, politicians, the public and parliament (united across the spectrum for once) have followed the lead of Turkey in condemning the action by France. Unsurprisingly all seen through the prism of Nagorno Karabagh. By and large, carbon copy comments but in more minor key, and certainly not dominating the political agenda to the exclusion of all else (representative comment cut and pasted below). There were two peaceful demonstrations outside the French Embassy [redact]. Apparently, there may be more.

There have been no serious threats to bilateral relations or trade to date that I have been able to pick up, but have not been able to check with the French Ambassador (away on leave). And, depending on events in the Senate, it cannot be ruled out. Some protestors and MPs have called for France to be replaced as one of the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, given what is perceived as blatant favouritism towards Armenia and for the Azeri Ambassador to France to be recalled for consultation.

We shall continue to follow locally.

Peter

*"Azerbaijan expresses its perplexity with the decision, which is absolutely incompatible with the freedom of speech and expression that is the basis of democracy in Europe and runs counter to commitments which France has undertaken to respect human rights and basic freedoms, and declares that the move is inadmissible," says a statement which the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry issued on Thursday evening [22 December].*

*The Azerbaijani Republic regrets that the French National Assembly has passed this bill whereas it turns a blind eye to the fact that hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were subjected to ethnic cleansing in the occupied territories [of Azerbaijan] and have become displaced persons in their motherland and to the continuation of flagrant violation of their rights, the Ministry's statement stresses.*

*The Milli Maclis [Parliament] of Azerbaijan strongly condemned the French parliament's draft law on made-up "Armenian genocide" in its meeting on Friday [23 December].*

*MP Siyavus Novruzov condemned the French parliament's decision. He said the French National Assembly, which did not react to the genocide committed in Xocali at the turn of the century, showed biased position when it called the unknown events of the beginning of the century as "genocide" and to implement punishment for denial of this. "Unfortunately, some of the Azerbaijani oppositionists and their families chose France for asylum".*

*"The French National Assembly's last decision on 'Armenian genocide' overshadows the democratic image of this county", deputy chairman and executive secretary of the New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) Ali Ahmadov said during the parliament's meeting on Friday [23 December].*

*He said! further France cannot give lessons of democracy to anyone. Ahmadov said this decision seriously called the France's fair position in the Minsk Group co-chairmanship in question.*

*We condemn the step by the National Assembly of France. The statement came from Member of Parliament Qanira Pasayeva. She said as Turkic people, we view it as a humiliation and libel. "We*

*cannot wait for the French Senate to consider it so that we can express our attitude as Milli Maclis. I think that we have to appeal as a parliament before this issue is raised in the French Senate".*

*The Member of Parliament believes that it is necessary to point in the message that the adoption of the law would affect not only the French-Turkish relations but also the relations between France and Azerbaijan.*

*Deputy speaker Bahar Muradova said Azerbaijani state, parliament and people supported Turkey. "The French National Assembly's decision is contrary to the European values. These claims against Turkey are directed to Turkey's aspirations for EU membership. This decision of the French parliament is ridiculous".*

*The parliamentarian said Azerbaijan must offer removal of France from the co-chairmanship of OSCE Minsk Group.*

[redact]

**From:** [Redact]

**Sent:** 23 December 2011 15:06

**To:** [Redact]

**Cc:** [Redact]

**Subject:** FRANCE: National Assembly vote to criminalize denial of genocides - Armenian views

A round-up of Armenian media views is attached in case of interest. In summary, from that and other contacts today, mostly a tone of victory celebrations. But also a few more nuanced views.

- Unsurprisingly, mostly an enthusiastic welcome; a fair amount of opinions that France has shown other countries (not least the US) how to behave.
- The only official reaction has been from Foreign Minister Nalbandyan: "France reclaimed its reputation as a homeland to human rights protection and proved once more its commitment to universal values" by adopting the draft law on criminalization of denial of genocides adopted by the French National Assembly today. "I would like to express my gratitude towards French leadership, National Assembly and the French people once more. By recognizing the Armenian genocide by law still 10 years ago, the French people showed that human rights are a supreme value. Today, by adopting the draft law, it reconfirmed that crimes against humanity have no periods of limitation and their denial should be condemned".
- A number of media comments suggest people were shocked by the strength of Turkey's threats and apparent continuing. Many people conclude that the visceral Turkish response showed Turkey's true face, confirming more sceptical opinions here that nothing had really changed and the 2009-10 steps towards normalisation were indeed just for show. And some bafflement at, eg reports of French Turks demanding the right to deny genocide.
- One blogger, perhaps representing one wider current of opinion, commented that he had not seen a need for France to criminalise denial but had changed his mind once he saw the strength of Turkey's response.
- Some commentators also note the irony of Turkey criticising France for "dictating history" given Turkey's long and active record of persecuting those who questioned the official line on this.
- Very few reports of dissenting voices in Turkey, although a critical Hurriyet commentary was picked up.

- **[redact]**
- Some other notes of caution from those sceptical that France will see this through; or that it will actually benefit long-term progress; and some speculation on the potential impact of this on France's role as a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, given the very critical Azeri response.
- A number of bloggers and others also comment with admiration on the way the debate was conducted in the Assemblée Nationale, contrasting the serious, substantive debate with Armenia's own, less impressive National Assembly.
- No media approaches to us yet.

**[Redact]**