



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Consideration of Recognition of the Republic of Artsakh's Independence

1. Resolution Recognizing the Independence of the Republic of Artsakh

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Action Item

Approved for October 27, 2020 **calendar**

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

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RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully recommends that Council consider taking a position to formally recognize the Republic of Artsakh.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

This report is being presented at the request of City Council for consideration to recognize the Republic of Artsakh as an independent nation.

History

The name Artsakh dates back to the classical period, when the region was one of the provinces of the Armenian kingdoms. For much of the Middle Ages, though formally under the Persian Empire, the region maintained autonomy. Problems over Artsakh's status began after the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the retreat of Russian troops from the Caucasus. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan claimed the region as theirs when they became independent in May 1918. In July 1918, a congress elected by residents of the region voted unanimously to become part of the Armenian Republic. Nevertheless, when the Soviet Union took control of the Caucasus, Artsakh was placed within the boundaries of Soviet Azerbaijan—though it was granted autonomous status as the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO). The oblast's borders were drawn such that they were not contiguous with the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR).

After the region's establishment as an autonomous oblast, the government of NKAO persisted in efforts to join the Armenian SSR. NKAO brought the issue before USSR central bodies in the 1930s as well as in 1945, 1965, 1967 and 1977, but each effort was unsuccessful; oftentimes, the principle advocates were imprisoned. NKAO maintained its autonomous status throughout the USSR period. During Mikhail Gorbachev's era of perestroika and glasnost toward the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, the regional government once again demanded a transfer to Armenia, passing a resolution in its representative body in 1988.

Azerbaijani troops had in effect been at war against armed Armenian groups since 1988. Upon Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's (NKR) demand for self-determination, fighting in the region escalated, lasting three years and leaving a death toll of about 30,000. In 1991, the NKAO adopted a declaration proclaiming itself the independent Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in accordance with the appropriate USSR law. In a December 1991 referendum, 99 percent of participants voted for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, though Nagorno-Karabakh's Azeri minority boycotted the vote. Fighting finally ended in May 1994 with a cease-fire—known as the Bishkek Protocol—signed by Armenian and Azerbaijani defense ministers, along with the commander in chief of the Artsakh Defense Army. Besides the NKAO, ethnic Armenian forces had also asserted control over surrounding districts, ensuring contiguity with the Republic of Armenia and a security buffer zone.

Nagorno-Karabakh Republic maintains that it is a free, sovereign state; however, it has chosen not to apply for U.N. membership ahead of a final negotiated settlement. Countries around the world consider Azerbaijan to be the successor of the Azerbaijani

SSR, which included the NKAO (now NKR), and no country recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh Republic as independent.

Current Conflict

In July 2020, fighting broke out across the border in Armenia proper for several days—reigniting the conflict and sparking the current escalation. Armenian authorities published images of destroyed infrastructure, including the bombing of a kindergarten in Armenia’s Tavush region and a textile factory producing masks for the coronavirus pandemic. When a high-ranking Azerbaijani general was killed in the crossfire, anti-Armenian rhetoric escalated in Azerbaijan, when tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis took to the streets in Baku chanting “death to Armenians” and marched to the Parliament building, demanding war with Armenia. Meanwhile, Turkey stood firmly behind Azerbaijan, with Turkish President Erdogan having proclaimed, “[W]e will continue to fulfill the mission our grandfathers have carried out for centuries in the Caucasus”—an indirect reference to the Armenian Genocide carried out by the founders of the Turkish Republic.

Late summer was quieter following this uptick of violence in July, but worrying signs remained. Other than this, life within Artsakh and along the Line of Contact was relatively peaceful, until September 27, 2020, when military conflict erupted once again. Since then, civilian cities, including the capital city of Stepanakert, far from the Line of Contact in Artsakh, have been shelled—killing and injuring civilians and journalist. Other targets have included sites of worship and cultural heritage, as well as key bridges which allow travel in and out of the mountainous region, which could severely hinder humanitarian efforts from reaching the population.

Position of Armenia on Artsakh Conflict

Armenia believes that the improvement of the peace process is impossible without full participation of the Republic of Artsakh in the negotiations, and that the conflict settlement should be based on the following principles:

- Artsakh conflict settlement must be based on recognition of the Nagorno-Karabakh peoples’ right to self-determination;
- Artsakh should have uninterrupted land communication with Armenia, under jurisdiction of the Armenian side; and
- The security of Artsakh should be internationally guaranteed.

According to the President of Armenia, adoption of these principles and international enforcement will enable achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem.

Armenia attaches importance to the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group in the Artsakh conflict settlement process as a viable format for the settlement, which has enough potential to find ways of settlement. Armenia seeks a settlement exclusively through peaceful means. Azerbaijan’s attempts to get unilateral concessions by the threat of use of force continue to be the main obstacle for the settlement through compromise. In a televised interview on October 20, 2020, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev indicated to the country that he had no intention of stopping the hostilities by stating, “the victorious

Azerbaijani army is gaining new victories on the battlefield. We are fighting on our own land, defending our own land, and we will continue to drive the invaders out of our lands.”

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with adoption of this resolution.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: The City Council may approve the resolution as presented.

Alternative 2: The City Council may direct staff to bring back an alternate resolution.

Alternative 3: The City Council may choose to not approve the resolution and not take a position on this matter.

Alternative 4: The City Council may consider any other alternative not proposed by staff.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

N/A

EXHIBITS

None