



# KIVDF

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## Launching free economic zone in Armenia's Meghri not feasible



By Abdul Kerimkhanov

**L**aunching a free trade zone (FEZ) in Armenia's Meghri region, a small town on the country's border with Iran, is unlikely today, Head of Meghri united community Mkhitar Zakaryan said on October 14.

The first stage of the FEZ project in Meghri was scheduled to commence in 2018, and to be completed by 2020. However, not much progress has been made so far.

Zakaryan believes that right now the FEZ idea is impossible to implement due to the fact that there is even no electricity and water in this area.

As he emphasized, if an entrepreneur decides to invest several million in the FEZ, no one will be able to present him the conditions and even talk about the rules in this zone, since there is no developed charter and designated canons in place with regards to the FEZ.

Zakaryan noted that the land issue also interferes with the FEZ launch, in particular, the criminal case on illegally held auctions for the acquisition of land. In this context, he added that the Meghri community is ready to donate its lands to the zone only if it is a state entity.

Although officially Meghri FEZ was opened in December 2017, so far, no company on the area has been operating. The telephone number of the "Meghri FEZ" management company is disconnected, while the office of this enterprise, which was previously located in the building of the Armenian Ministry of Economy, is closed.

It is noteworthy that a criminal case has been launched into the case of abuse in Meghri FEZ. The

head of the community, located next door to the FEZ, embezzled 32 hectares of land back in 2014 for 2.5 million drams (\$5,237), and in 2016 the village headman sold fake 1.4 hectares for 2 million drams (\$4,190).

Commenting on the Meghri FEZ future in mid-September 2019, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said he had visited the area in 2018 and learned that it had no land plots. He said the Meghri zone had attracted few Armenian, Iranian and other firms so far because former government officials and their cronies had privatized land plots in and around the zone at disproportionately low prices obstructing economic activity there.

Earlier, Mohsen Rahimi, Commercial Attache of the Embassy of Iran to Armenia, said that no active steps have been taken for Meghri FEZ functioning.

Thus, it can be stated that the activities of both current and previous Armenian government to improve the investment climate in the country were ineffective.

Until recently, Armenia had pinned hopes on Meghri FEZ located on the border with Iran. The Armenian side advertised the FEZ as a link between Iran and the EAEU space. However, Yerevan still cannot find an answer to the question of how the EAEU countries can use the Armenian services.

Over the past two decades, Armenia has been economically isolated from the outside world due to its continued occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, which has resulted in closing of the country's borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey. The country continues to lose transit opportunities because of its hostile relations with its neighbours.

## Head of Karabakh's Azerbaijani community slams holding forum in occupied territories



By Abdul Kerimkhanov

**B**y holding a forum in Azerbaijan's occupied Khankandi city, Armenia seeks to legitimize its occupation of the region, the head of the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh region, Tural Ganjaliyev, said on October 10.

A forum titled "Cooperation for the Sake of Justice and Peace - Friends of Nagorno-Karabakh" was held in Khankandi on October 11, 2019, according to Armenian media.

Ganjaliyev said that representatives of the illegal regime set up in the occupied Azerbaijani territories will be the main speakers of the

forum. The forum will discuss two main topics: "Right of Nagorno-Karabakh people to self-determination" and "Possibility of resolving the conflict peacefully and increasing international relations of Nagorno-Karabakh."

He stressed that Yerevan is far from a sense of justice and is an obstacle to the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. "How does it have audacity to speak of cooperation for justice and peace?"

"What contribution did Armenia make to the cooperation for peace?" Ganjaliyev questioned, adding that "It would be better if Armenia discussed its injustice, rather than justice, the damage caused to the 'cooperation for justice and peace', rather than 'cooperation for justice

and peace."

He further noted that the forum serves as an excuse for the occupation and ethnic cleansing, rather than to the cooperation for justice and peace.

"This so-called forum is another game by Armenia, the country which killed Azerbaijanis, who are the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh region, carried out ethnic cleansing against them under the guise of the principle of self-determination," Ganjaliyev stated.

Meanwhile, a meeting between the Azerbaijani community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and the young people of the Azerbaijan Youth Foundation, born in Nagorno-Karabakh region was held on October 11.

During the meeting, Ganjaliyev

informed the participants about the Community's activities and the implemented projects.

He pointed out that the conflict with Armenia is underway today on all platforms, in particular, military, diplomatic and social media.

Urging young people to be more active on social networks, Ganjaliyev urged them to work towards informing the international community about injustice against Azerbaijan, namely Azerbaijan's occupation by Armenia and expulsion of Azerbaijanis from their homes.

In turn, Farid Jafarov, Executive Director of the Azerbaijan Youth Foundation, informed the participants about the Fund's activity, its ongoing projects and grant competitions. He also called on the young people from the Nagorno-Karabakh region to cooperate with the fund.

While delivering speech at the event, Azerbaijani MP Flora Gasimova who is also member of the board of the Azerbaijani Community of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region, called on young people to be more active in exposing the Armenian lies.

Baku strengthens the role of Karabakh's Azerbaijani community and wants to ensure equal access to negotiations of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in the region.

In determining the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, it is impossible to take as a basis the position of only the Armenian side. The Azerbaijani community, which as a result of ethnic cleansing was forced to leave their homes, has the legal right to participate in determining the future legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Without the recognition of this right, a comprehensive and fair settlement of the conflict cannot be achieved.

## Bosnian expert says U.S. likely to lift Armenian-initiated Act

By Abdul Kerimkhanov

**T**he United States will most probably lift the Armenian-initiated Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act that bans any kind of direct U.S. aid to the Azerbaijani government.

"I am more than sure that under the next U.S. President, as of 2020-2024, we will have that cancellation," Bosnian expert Sabahudin Hadzialic, who is Assoc. Prof. Dr & Dr. Honoris Causa, said in an interview with Azernews.

Hadzialic described Section 907 to the Freedom Support Act as a stumbling block in the U.S.-Azerbaijani relations.

Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act had been lobbied by the Armenian Diaspora and bans direct U.S. aid to the Azerbaijani government, thus making Azerbaijan the only post-Soviet state not to receive direct aid from the United States government to facilitate economic and political stability. The section to the Act followed Azerbaijan's blockade of Armenia that was in response to Armenia's occupation of its territories.

Speaking about the Armenian lobby's potential to hurt Baku-Washington ties, Hadzialic said: "The Armenian lobby cannot hurt good, open and straightforward politics. You just need to respond quickly to any provocation from the opposite side," Hadzialic stated.

The expert said that the U.S. is interested in good ties with Azerbaijan given Azerbaijan's strategic importance as Europe's energy supplier and its cooperation with the U.S. in fight against terrorism.

Hadzialic reminded that Govern-

nor of Nebraska state Peter Ricketts proclaimed May 28 as "Azerbaijan National Day", adding that the move tells a lot about relationship between the two countries. He also mentioned that the U.S. presidents frequently make contacts with the Azerbaijani authorities.

Hadzialic recalled President Donald Trump's letter to President Ilham Aliyev in May 2017, where Trump highlighted Azerbaijan's efforts in global security. Trump also expressed his country's commitment "to strengthening our relationship through dialogue on security,

economic cooperation, and democratic principles."

The expert stressed that Azerbaijan is a secular Muslim state that has shared values with the West, which endears Azerbaijan even more to Washington. He cited strategic partnership between the U.S. and Azerbaijan as major milestones in the relations between the two countries.

"Being a Muslim country, Azerbaijan is also secular and multicultural. Azerbaijan knows how culture and sports are important and supports them immensely. For the U.S.,

it is also among the most important factors," he noted.

Commenting on the importance of South Caucasus for the U.S., the expert said that the region is important, but not of vital interest for Washington. Hadzialic said that the U.S. interest in the South Caucasus is mainly about preserving regional stability, preventing the resumption of frozen conflicts, and most importantly, supporting democratic change and better governance.

The expert further pointed out that Azerbaijan is a very convenient platform - "a lighthouse" for regional cooperation in Eurasia.

He noted that no other country in Eurasia region enjoy as much potential for cooperation as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Hadzialic urged Azerbaijan to continue with this kind of open policy contacts, which is very important from the geostrategic point of view.

Hadzialic praised Azerbaijan's multi-faceted economic partnerships. "Just continue to develop responsibilities and obligations towards your own people. So far you have done an excellent job," he concluded.



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