

# ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN TODAY

## EVENTS AND COMMENTS

Electronic Bulletin

N 10, 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 platform for virtual interactions or distance communication among specialists from Armenia and Azerbaijan who represent various spheres of life in both societies. We assume that readers may both find trustworthy information here about contemporary Armenia and Azerbaijan, and draw parallels between the situation in the various fields of their specialization in both countries due to the absolute parallelism of topics and addressed issues.

**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](http://www.regioncenter.info)  
[www.publicdialogues.info](http://www.publicdialogues.info)  
<http://www.facebook.com/RegionCenter?ref=hl>

The Institute of Peace and Democracy – [www.tt-ipd.info](http://www.tt-ipd.info)  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Институт-Мира-и-Демократии-Institute-for-Peace-and-Democracy/251251188282946>

# PRESENTATION OF PUBLIC DIALOGUES WEBSITE IN YEREVAN AND BAKU

The presentations of the joint Armenian and Azerbaijani website took place on January 16 in Yerevan and on January 18 in Baku. The website ([www.publicdialogues.info](http://www.publicdialogues.info)) was created within the framework of a project, implemented by Region Research Center (Armenia) and the Institute for Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan) with the financial support of the British Embassies in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

## AN EXCERPT FROM THE PRESENTATION MADE IN BAKU BY LEYLA YUNUS, DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY



In the Right:

**LEYLA YUNUS**

Director of Institute for Peace and Democracy

“During the hostilities there is no need to hold any negotiations. However, when the hostilities are at a halt, everything possible should be done in order to ensure the peaceful solution of the problem.

The Institute for Peace and Democracy was established in 1995. Since then we have been actively participating in various projects of “citizens’ diplomacy,” projects that helped the citizens of both countries to receive first-hand and accurate information on the state of affairs in the neighboring country.

The necessity to establish connections with the Armenian party is acknowledged even by Azerbaijani TV stations.

We constantly face the need to receive information. Only one example to illustrate my point – this week I received a call from the ANS correspondent who asked me to put him in contact with an Armenian political scientist so that he could receive some comments on the upcoming elections in Armenia.”

**AN EXCERPT FROM THE MATERIAL  
PUBLISHED IN WWW.CONTACT.AZ  
ON THE PRESENTATION IN BAKU ON JANUARY 18**

<http://wap.contact.az/docs/2013/Politics/011800025108ru.htm>

The intrigue of today's presentation was carried on by the emotional talks made by two women who were obviously trying to break the regular flow of the event. These people had suffered in the conflict; they had lost their close relatives and did not quite understand what was happening at the event. They stated they could not understand how any dialogues could be built with Armenians when the territory was still under occupation.

The Ambassador of France to Azerbaijan, Pascal Meunier, who was attending the event, answered the questions asked by the women, with empathy to their pain and loss. He reminded of the conflict that existed between Germany and France for many years. His relatives fought that war, however, this did not mean that today the conflict sustains between the representatives of the two countries. He mentioned that every war ended with peace. The French diplomat announced that the given project was of major significance, for the more contacts and communication there was between the representatives of the two countries, the closer they would get to peace.

The German Ambassador to Azerbaijan Herbert Quelle, who was participating in the event, said that the history of Germany contained a lot of conflicts with its neighbors – France and Poland. However, it is necessary to look into the future and not to look back.

The Ambassador of Poland, the acting head of the EU mission to Azerbaijan Toralf Pilz, the first secretaries of Switzerland, the Netherlands, the US and Great Britain also took part in the event.



From Left to Right:

**HERBERT QUELLE**

German Ambassador to Azerbaijan

**MICHAEL LABENDA**

Ambassador of Poland to Azerbaijan,  
Employees of Embassies of Switzerland and  
the Netherlands in Azerbaijan



From Left to Right:

**PASCAL MEUNIER**

French Ambassador to Azerbaijan

**TORALF PILZ**

Head of Political, Economics and Press  
& Information Section





## OPINIONS OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE PRESENTATION IN YEREVAN

### BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO ARMENIA KATHY LEACH



**KATHY LEACH**  
British Ambassador to Armenia

**CHRISTOPH BREUNIG**  
Deputy Head of the German Embassy  
in Armenia

“For years UK government has supported projects that try to give people from the both sides of the conflict in Armenia and Azerbaijan a chance to meet, to work together, to create something together. We particularly like to support projects which try to fill the lack of good fact based information which each side has about each other.

Internet in this prolonged conflict has become in some ways another weapon with bloggers and others on each side posting inflammatory comments about the other side. We think that the internet should also be a place for the others who want to make a difference, who want to try to find a common language of dialogue and can present that information for the others”.

### JOHNNY MELIKYAN, A POLITICAL SCIENTIST (ARMENIA)



**JOHNNY MELIKYAN**  
in the center

“Publicdialogues.info is the only website in Armenia which unites the two peoples involved in a prolonged conflict in the information space and is a source of reliable information. Everything is done before the eyes of journalists. In the course of online press conferences the journalists from Armenia and Azerbaijan are given an opportunity to ask experts questions on the Karabakh conflict, interstate relations, regional problems, and everyone sees the question asked and the answer provided.

There is no propaganda here. This is the entire positive that we have. And our media outlets can freely make use of the website, and why not, ensure its PR. I welcome the existence of this site. It can serve as a reliable platform and a source of information for both Azerbaijani and our media outlets.”

### STYOPA SAFARYAN, SECRETARY OF THE HERITAGE PARTY (ARMENIA)



**STYOPA SAFARYAN**  
Secretary of the Heritage Party

“I welcome the existence of this website; I participated in this project, within the framework of a press conference with journalists. Such contacts are useful, for if there is no dialogue there will be many intrapersonal monologues. And in the course of the monologues people usually express themselves differently from the way of expression they choose in dialogues.

In the event organized in Yerevan there were also MPs of the RA National Assembly, the representatives of Germany, France, OSCE, and the delegation of the European Commission, representatives of higher educational institutions, and reporters from various media outlets.”



**LAURA BAGHDASARYAN**  
Director of Region Research Center



**TEVAN POGHOSYAN**  
Deputy of the National Assembly  
of the Republic of Armenia

AN EXCERPT FROM THE INTERVIEW OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGION  
RESEARCH CENTER LAURA BAGHDASARYAN IN THE NEWS PROGRAM  
'THE COUNTRY TODAY' ON YERKIR MEDIA TV (JANUARY 16, 2013)

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poXhtefAqJw&feature=youtu.be>)

**Question** – How long will the website continue? Aren't you sorry for the energy and efforts you invest, for there is great probability that later you will have to freeze all of that just as it happened with other joint projects?

**Answer** – I must confess that it is difficult for both us and our colleagues in Azerbaijan. But the interest in the information on the opposite side will never fade out. Our website has been created as a result of long-term cooperation. We started our cooperation at a different spot, not with the creation of the website. The interest in the information on the opposite side will always be there, and I think that we are on the right track. We are not resolving the Karabakh issue; we try to ensure the two-way flow of information on each other. The peculiarity of this project consists in the synchronous implementation of activities, and I think that this is the only way to ensure the awareness of the representatives of the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies on each other's lives, inclusive of spheres that are little related or totally unrelated to the Karabakh conflict, but are still important to the people in their everyday life. I think that we are on the right track. Still the information vacuum between the parties is impossible to create. However, even if we manage to do this, in the modern world of technology this vacuum will be very quickly replenished with information that has nothing to do with the interests of Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERNET PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL  
CANDIDATE, LEADER OF HERITAGE



**Party Raffi Hovannisian  
for Armenian and Azerbaijani mass media**

**“Arminfo” news agency (Armenia):** Your faction has many times raised the issue of the expediency of acknowledging the independence of NKR by Armenia. Could we say that in case you win the upcoming Presidential elections, this issue can be considered resolved?



-Yes, the Mountainous Karabakh Republic and the Republic of Azerbaijan of our times should be acknowledged as territories within the new, post-Soviet borders. At the same time the issues of demarcation lines and the establishment of good-neighborly relations between them, the systematization of security guarantees and the restoration of communication, as well as the guaranteed voluntary return of refugees of all nationalities should be solved through interstate negotiations.

**“Bizim Yol” newspaper (Azerbaijan):** Mr. Hovannisian, how do you classify the pro-Russian and pro-Western forces in our country? Which sentiments – pro-Russian or pro-Western – would you think are stronger?

-In Armenia it is necessary to restore absolute respect for our own sovereignty, because only in that case will we be able to lead a modern international policy, based on our own vital interests, at the same time respecting all but not surrendering to any vertical pressures. For example, Armenia and Russia still have some unused potential to establish real and strategic relations with each other, relations to be reformatted into modern horizontal correlations and harmonious in the post-Soviet context. Armenia, as one of the ancient sources of Western civilization, must be able to return to its democratic essence and spiritual values, and in so doing become a full member of the European Union. Armenia must ensure its security in the West and in the East, establishing a system of bilateral relations with all its partners without any compulsory and formal participation in any collective organization.

**“Turan” news agency (Azerbaijan):** How would you assess the five-year Presidency of your main contender Serzh Sargsyan?

-I would assess it negatively and I would qualify it as activity that needs urgent alterations.

**“Novoye Vremya” newspaper (Azerbaijan):** In case you are elected President, what kind of relations do you envisage between Armenia and Azerbaijan in terms of the resolution of the Karabakh conflict?

-No matter how hard it may be we must all get ready for the prospect that in this changing world, and in this region, the states of Azerbaijan, MKR and Armenia, and their peoples, must lead peaceful lives in good-neighborly relations, and ultimately come to share the same value system. The path to such a prospect presumes the continuation of multilateral civil, political, professional and interpersonal contacts, because the alternative to it is war, which is unfortunately mentioned by our officials more and more frequently. But war is the initiative of the weak and it will become a curse onto all of us, and its initiator in the first place.

**Public Radio of Armenia:** Mr. Hovannisian, who do you see in the post of the Prime Minister of Armenia in case you are elected into office?

-Currently, I am not negotiating over this matter with anyone. There are many respectable candidates in different circles, among political party members and the representatives of civil society, and in professional communities, too. And if the candidate is someone deserving, even if he/she has worked with the previous authority (I acted as opponent to them all, with no

exception), I will then invite that person over. I am proud of the path the Heritage party has covered and my colleagues in the party, who always stood next to the people while solving national issues or problems related to democracy, who were in the square during the March 1st tragedy (the politician means the clash that took place between the marchers and the defense and law enforcement agencies on March 1st, 2008 – Comment by editor). But they are not candidates for the Prime Minister's position. The presidential candidate nominated by the Heritage party is a civil candidate, and I am not calling on people to unite around my person, around Raffi Hovannisian. It is important to realize the necessity to overcome the rupture between the civil society and political processes. This month should be the time to build an atmosphere of trust and to make our human rights advocates, environmentalists and other activists participate in these processes. I respect the decision made by anyone, and even the decisions not to participate in the elections, although from my perspective this is quite surprising for forces represented in parliament. But I also know that hundreds of thousands of citizens would be happy to see changes happen, they want to change our country, and this change will take place if everyone takes part. If they do not want to see Raffi there, let them vote for the one they would prefer to be their president. I respect those candidates who at the most difficult moment made up their minds not to sit about and were nominated as candidates. And finally I think that the struggle will take place between two forces – the citizens of today and tomorrow and the ruling powers.

In the internet press conference of Raffi Hovannisian participated journalists from Armenia (news agency “Arminfo” - [www.arminfo.am](http://www.arminfo.am), news agency “News Armenia”- [www.newsarmenia.am](http://www.newsarmenia.am), Public Radio of Armenia, internet newspaper “Panorama”-[www.panorama.am](http://www.panorama.am), news agency “Regnum” - [www.regnum.ru](http://www.regnum.ru)) and from Azerbaijan (news agency “Turan” - [www.contact.az](http://www.contact.az), newspaper “Bizim Yol” - [www.bizimyol.az](http://www.bizimyol.az), newspaper “Zerkalo” - [www.zerkalo.az](http://www.zerkalo.az), newspaper Novoye Vremy - [www.novoye-vremya.com](http://www.novoye-vremya.com)).

Full version of the internet press conference: <http://www.publicdialogues.info/en/node/435>