

AGBU**Europe**

OMBUDSMAN OF UNRECOGNIZED REPUBLIC OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH CALLS FOR EUROPE TO HELP HIM PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

Brussels, 17/02/2017 - Yesterday the Ombudsman of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), Ruben Melikyan, addressed the last in a series of events and meetings from February 13 to 16 in Brussels, Strasbourg and Vienna, where different European institutions are located.

This was no routine visit by a foreign official in the European capital: the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, in the South Caucasus, is not internationally recognized, as its status remains in dispute; it therefore does not entertain formal relations with official bodies. The mandate of the Ombudsman of Karabakh is to serve as a human rights watchdog, reporting on human rights violations, investigating complaints, and advising parliament on the drafting of new legislation.

Explaining the rationale for the visit, Mr Melikyan told his audience in Brussels that “in order to defend human rights in Karabakh, we must build capacity. For that, we need international contacts and engagement.” The visit allowed the Ombudsman to establish working relations with a number of human rights professionals.

During these meetings, Mr Melikyan presented a recent report on the war crimes committed by Azerbaijani armed forces during a 4-day offensive in April 2016. Chillingly summarizing his findings, Melikyan said that “90% of the Armenians soldiers and civilians captured during that offensive were either tortured, executed, or mutilated”. He added that similar acts were committed in very different locations, suggesting that they are encouraged by the Azerbaijani armed forces. Melikyan further called on international organizations to investigate such crimes.

Mr Melikyan reported on some of the cases he works on in NK, including some which involve ensuring that the rights of Azerbaijanis soldiers who were captured by Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Forces (NKDF) are respected. Melikyan claims there is a broad consensus in NK not to allow acts of revenge to be committed, on the grounds that “our strength is in our standards”.

Mr Melikyan commented on the extradition from Belarus to Azerbaijan, on February 8, of Alexander Lapshin, a Russian blogger, for the supposed crime of



having travelled to, and written about Karabakh. Soon after this, people who were known to have travelled to Karabakh started receiving emails intended to intimidate them and several have cancelled their travel plans to Karabakh.

The visit of Mr Melikyan was coordinated by AGBU Europe, an organization of the Armenian Diaspora, as part of a campaign for the EU and its civil society to engage with Nagorno-Karabakh.

Says Nicolas Tavitian, of AGBU Europe, “the EU has a policy called 'engagement without recognition' that it applies to all other unrecognized states in its periphery: Transnistria, Abkhazia, northern Cyprus in particular. It must do the same in Karabakh. Granted, Azerbaijan's leadership is not easy to handle, and the country has oil and gas. But doing Azerbaijan's bidding to isolate Karabakh increases the likelihood and frequency of future wars and of barbaric acts. By going along with it, Europe is betraying its values.”

Tavitian went on to say: “in view of the situation, we are particularly grateful to the many people who have accepted to help with this visit or to meet Mr Melikyan. Particular thanks are due to MEP Frank Engel who hosted events at the European Parliament.”

AGBU Europe coordinates and develops the pan-European activities of the [Armenian General Benevolent Union](#). Established in 1906, AGBU is the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization. AGBU Europe runs numerous programmes in fields relating to academic research, the preservation and promotion of heritage, education and culture as well as awareness raising, advocacy and leadership training.

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Leaders of AGBU Europe meet in Brussels for European Summit – Brussels, Belgium – January 28-29, 2017



30 January 2017

40 members of AGBU Europe from 13 European countries, including executive committee members, chairs of chapters and Young Professionals groups, gathered during the week-end (28-29/01) in Brussels to work on the implementation of AGBU Europe's strategy for the upcoming 5 years.

Participants took part, in turn, in all of the four workshops organized around the four pillars of AGBU Europe's strategy: "Language and Heritage", "Leadership and Influence", "Network platform for Stewardship" and "Prosperity for Armenia". They were able to give their feedback and share insights on projects such as the campaign for EU in Karabakh, the promotion of civil society in Armenia, the e-learning opportunities of the Armenian Virtual College and the

Goriz Seminars.

The vibrant discussions were fruitful and resulted in measurable action plans to implement the goals of the strategy and move forward.

The summit was also an opportunity to bring the members of AGBU Europe close to each other, sharing pleasant moments together, combining work with a visit to the European Parliamentarium and with a first star restaurant dinner, in the heart of Brussels.

"It was an amazing week-end, full of dynamic work and a great sense of cohesion", says Nadia Gortzounian, President of AGBU Europe, adding that she was "moved by the deep commitment among the younger participants towards the Armenian Nation" and looks forward to the next summit scheduled in early 2018.

UNESCO supports Matenadaran to celebrate 350th anniversary of Bible's first edition



In 2017 Matenadaran, the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, with the support of UNESCO will organize a series of events to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the first edition of the Armenian Bible. The Director of Matenadaran Vahan Ter-Ghevondian told NEWS.am, that Matenadaran received that assistance at the end of 2016.

According to him, the publication of the Bible in Armenian is a remarkable event not only for Armenians but also worldwide. The celebration program has three components: exhibition of antique books, publication of the research dedicated to 350th anniversary of the Armenian print Bible, and a conference.

The main events will start in June and will last until the end of the year.

The first Bible printed in Armenian was published in Amsterdam in 1666-1668 by Voskan Yerevantsy. This is one of the best examples of the ancient books published in Armenian and one of the most valuable publications of the Bible in the world.