AGOS AND THE EMPHASIS ON 'ARARAT'

AVİM

The Agos newspaper, one of the publications of Turkeys Armenian community that mostly publishes in Turkish, has begun to increasingly adopt the discourse of the fanatic members of the Armenian diaspora ever since the murder of the newspapers founder and chief editor Hrant Dink. An example that can be given for this transformation is the Turkish-language commentary series titled Ararat'ın Öte Yanı (the Other Side of Ararat) that is published in the said newspaper.[1] These commentaries address the current political developments in Armenia. The problem with these Turkish-language commentaries has to do with their title; instead of using the Turkish name Ağrı, they use its Armenian counterpart; Ararat. While one might initially think that using the foreign-language name of something (in this case, a mountain in Turkey) instead of its Turkish name does not mean much, it should not be forgotten that names have powerful psychological impacts on both individuals and societies.

Ağrı Mountain (also referred to as Mount Ararat in English) holds an important in place in Armenian ethno-nationalist discourse (it should be kept in mind that Ağrı Mountain looks very impressive from Armenias capital Yerevan). Indeed, according to some accounts, Ağrı Mountain is one of most important symbols of the Armenian people. As such, according Armenian ethno-nationalists, Ağrı Mountain and the Western Armenia region (the name Armenian ethno-nationalists use when referring to Turkeys eastern parts) that encompasses this mountain must be taken back in the future. However, Anatolia is the homeland of the Turks. A neighboring country claiming and seeking to take back these lands on which Turkish people live points to the existence of an unhealthy mindset disconnected from reality.

At the same time, it should be indicated that Ağrı Mountain and all of Anatolia is the common heritage of all Turkish citizens, including those of Armenian descent.

As such, by insisting on emphasizing the name Ararat -the Armenian-language counterpart of the name Ağrı- in its Turkish publication, Agos is rejecting a common heritage of Turkey and is instead pointing towards the discriminatory and destructive discourse of certain fanatical Armenian groups.

This fanatical mindset and the danger it represents should not be underestimated, since it finds adherents even in the upper echelons of power. For example, during an event attended by the youth in 2011, former President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan had this to

say upon hearing the question will we be able to take back our western lands [Eastern Anatolia/Western Armenia] along with Mount Ararat?:

> This is up to your generation. My generation, for example, successfully fulfilled its own duty. In the 90s, we rescued a part of our homeland, Artsakh [the Nagorno-Karabakh region belonging to Azerbaijan], from the hands of the enemy. Every generation has a duty [to fulfill]. Whether your generation will be able to fulfill its duty as we had done will be up to your unity and solidarity...[2]

These words uttered by the president of a neighboring country regarding lands belonging to Turkey lays bare the hostility some foreign Armenian groups have towards Turkey. With its emphasis on Ararat, Agos is placing itself either knowingly or unknowingly in the same camp as those who espouse this hostile attitude.

[1] For the latest example, please see: Alin Ozinian, ARARAT'IN ÖTE YANI/ Paşinyandan taktik istifa, Agos, 3 Ekim 2018, http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/21346/ararat-in-ote-yani-pasinyandan-taktik-istifa

[2] Nerdun Hacıoğlu, Karabağı biz aldık Ağrıyı size bıraktık, *Hürriyet*, 26 Temmuz 2011, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/karabag-i-biz-aldik-agri-yi-size-biraktik-18338718

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To cite this article: AVİM, . 2026. "AGOS AND THE EMPHASIS ON 'ARARAT'." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2018 / 52. October 12. Accessed November 05, 2026. https://avimbulten.org/en/Yorum/AGOS-AND-THE-EMPHASIS-ON-ARARAT

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