AVİM Commentary • No: 2025 / 5 •

MONTE MELKONIAN AND HIS TERRORIST IDENTITY

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This is the English translation of a Turkish language article that was originally published by AVİM on 29 November 2024. AVİM Translator Ahmet Can ÖKTEM contributed to the translation of the article.

On July 31, 1980, Galip Özmen, the Administrative Attaché of the Turkish Embassy in Athens, and his daughter Neslihan Özmen were brutally murdered in Athens by Monte Melkonian, a terrorist of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA). Years later, in 1992, the same terrorist was the killer of Azerbaijanis, including dozens of children, in the Karabakh War. For many years, the terrorist Melkonian was hailed as a folk hero by the Armenian state. He was even posthumously awarded the Military Cross, First Class and Golden Eagle medals, which are the highest military decorations of Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia. His body was buried on June 19, 1993 at the Yerablur Military Pantheon with a military ceremony[1].

But more disgraceful events followed. On July 28, 1994, a training military unit was named after the terrorist Monte Melkonian. Afterwards, by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No. N983 of August 10, 2017, the name of theArmenian Military School was changed to the Monte Melkonian Military College Foundation in August 2017. On September 1, 2017, on the occasion of Knowledge Day, the opening ceremony of the Monte Melkonian Military Colleges new complex was held in Dilijan. The flags of Monte Melkonian Military College and the Republic of Armenia were raised. Armenias Minister of Defense announced the motto of the college as Road to the heights. Monte Melkonians birthday, November 25, was set as a school holiday[2]. This information is currently available on the official website of the Armenian Army. What meaning can be derived, other than a threat to the regions countries, from a state paying such a degree of homage to a terrorist and naming its military college after the same terrorist?

Similarly, it is seen on Armenias official X account that the country commemorated Monte Melkonian on his birthday by declaring him a national hero in 2016 and 2021. In the 2016 commemoration, Armenia's official X account also cited the terrorist Melkonians quote, Dont drink toasts for me, but continue my work[3]. The 2021 commemoration read, Today is the #birthday of Monte #Melkonyan, National Hero of Armenia, Legend of the

#Armenian nation, Commander. His name will always remain in the history of #Armenia! We bow before you, Immortal Hero![4]

However, it is noteworthy that since 2021, the terrorist Monte Melkonian has not been commemorated on Armenian news pages on his birthday, except for praise that ignores his past. Especially in the recent period, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's discourse, which is in accordance with the views of Türkiye and Azerbaijan to a certain extent, is significant. In this context, one of the statements made by Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan is his call for improvement work on the location of the so-called monument to the Operation Nemesis terrorists, which was built in Yerevans Circular Park on April 24, 2023[5].

On September 20, 2024, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan regarding a range of urban development projects of the Yerevan Municipality. During the meeting, Circular Park[6], where the monument to Nemesis, the terrorist organization that massacred Turkish statesmen and Armenians in Anatolia, is located, was also taken into consideration.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has recently raised eyebrows with his steps regarding the Türkiye-Armenia and Azerbaijan-Armenia relations, which were considered to be radical by the Armenian diaspora and have led to him being subjected to intense criticism, including insults. During an interview, Pashinian stated We get so upset by ☀ the fact that some people in some places use the term Western Azerbaijan. But when we say Western Armenia, dont we think that it irritates some people? Just like they irritate us by saying Western Azerbaijan, we irritate others by saying Western Armenia.[7], which is a new milestone in Pashinyans method in Armenian politics.

We hope that Armenia with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who has at least to some extent contributed to the creation of a new, modern and peaceful atmosphere, will continue to be determined to contribute to the construction of a peaceful and open to regional cooperation Armenia by getting rid of the neighborly policies that were previously based on terror as soon as possible.

So far, it seems that an Armenia with Prime Minister Pashinyan is at least helping to create a new, modern and peaceful atmosphere and be rid of Armenias voracity of clinging on to the past. We hope that Armenia's policies will discontinue this tendency and continue having the intent of supporting the creation of an Armenia that is peaceful and open to regional cooperation by getting rid of the neighborly policies that were previously based on Armenian terrorism as soon as possible.

**Image: https://en.azvision.az/news/134234/news.html.*

[1] Siranush Ghazanchyan, Armenias National Hero Monte Melkonian would Have Been 63 Today, *Public Radio of Armenia*, armradio.am, 25 November 2020, https://en.armradio.am/2020/11/25/armenias-national-hero-monte-melkonian-would-have-been-63-today/

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[2] Military College Named After Monte Melkonian, https://www.mil.am/en/pages/33.

[3] #Armenia's national #hero, commander #Monte #Melkonian would have turned 59 today. "Don't drink toasts for me, but continue my work", x.com, *X*, 25 November 2016, https://x.com/armenia/status/802112579120332801.

[4] Today is the #birthday of Monte #Melkonyan, National Hero of Armenia, Legend of the #Armenian nation, Commander. His name will always remain in the history of #Armenia. We bow before you, Immortal Hero!, x.com, *X*, 25 November 2021, https://x.com/armenia/status/1463845349404069902.

[5] Section 4 of the Circular Park will be improved, *Radar Armenia*, radar.am, 29 August 2023, https://radar.am/en/news/yerevan-elections-2023-2586625129/.

[6] PM Pashinyan chairs discussion on urban development projects of the Yerevan Municipality, *The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, primeminister.am, https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2024/09/20/Nikol-Pashinyan-meeting/&ved=2ahUKEwiD88Dx8f6JAxVWYPEDHRQiEGwQxfQBKAB6BAgJEAE&usg=AOvVaw1Y_GXq8ZDCnNBsHCS7gZh_.

[7] Hoory Minoyan, Pashinyan Compares Western Armenia to Western Azerbaijan, *Armenian Weekly*, armenianweekly.com, 26 November 2024, https://armenianweekly.com/2024/11/26/pashinyan-compares-western-armenia-to-western-azerbaijan/.

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To cite this article: ELBİR, Hazel ÇAĞAN. 2026. "MONTE MELKONIAN AND HIS TERRORIST IDENTITY." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2025 / 5. January 10. Accessed November 21, 2026. https://avimbulten.org/en/Yorum/MONTE-MELKONIAN-AND-HIS-TERRORIST-IDENTITY

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