IS THE ARMENIAN TERROR BEING AWAKENED?

Ömer Engin LÜTEM

According to press news, Vazgen Sislan who says that he is among the leaders of ASALA, has stated in a press conference in Yerevan that ASALA continues its struggle against the enemy (against Turkey) with a different method, that they maintain their position as soldiers and that if necessary, they will begin the war against Turkey again. From these statements, it can be deduced that the Armenian terror organization ASALA maintains its existence in Yerevan and still carries on an unarmed struggle against Turkey, but if necessary, could also wage an armed struggle; in other words, could resort to terror. First we should deal with the person uttering those statements. His real and full name is Vazgen Sako Sesliyan, he is a Lebanese Armenian. He was the leader of an Armenian terror group consisting of four people who had attacked the Turkish Consulate General in Paris on 24 September 1981, murdering consulate guard Cemal Özden, seriously wounding Vice Consul Kaya Inal, and taking 56 people hostage for 15 hours. Sesliyan who had used the name Aleks Alekian during this operation had eventually surrendered just as the other members of the group had and was condemned to prison for seven years as a result of the case concluded two years after the consulates attack. This incident had created a serious problem back then between Turkey and France for reasons such the Turkish representative offices in France not being sufficiently protected and for rather soft punishments like imprisonment for only seven years of those being accused of murder. A majority of the Armenian terrorists who were arrested for their activities against Turkish diplomats, have not returned to their own countries after coming out of prison, but have moved to Armenia which provided them with employment and housing. Sesliyan has also done this and has spoken against Turkey at every given opportunity, and has also expressed, although implicitly, that they can restart their activities of terror. Could Armenian terror start again? The current conditions are much different than those in the 1970s and 1980s when people refrained from condemning acts of Armenian terror, particularly in Europe. Especially with the effect of the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001, public opinion has become very sensitive to terrorist events. Therefore, it is no longer possible to tolerate new initiatives of terror as it was done in the past. On the other hand, an independent Armenian state coming into existence has also created a change. Since it will not provide them with any benefits, Armenia will not support activities of terror being conducted against Turks and Turkeys interests. Moreover, in the case of new Armenian terrorist initiatives beginning, there is also the possibility to hold Armenia responsible, by expressing that Armenia does not take any action to prevent these. In relation to why members of ASALA, who generally maintained

their silence, has started to voice their ideas now, it is possible to state since Turkey has been highly criticized in Armenia for not ratifying the Protocols and implementing them, members of ASALA have tried to take advantage of this situation and to raise their own voices.

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