US ELECTIONS AND THE ARMENIANS

Ömer Engin LÜTEM

Tomorrow Presidential elections and also House of Representatives and the Senate by-elections will be held in the US.

The Armenian community in the US is closely concerned with these elections due to their claims from Turkey and the Karabakh issue. They strive for the election of those who share their views or who supports them, participate in election campaigns and give donations for the campaigns.

In order for various candidates to be supported and ensure that these candidates keep their promises if elected, a questionnaire composed by 28 questions is sent to them before the elections asking them to respond in writing and sign it. If these questions are responded positively, the candidates will have given their written promise beforehand regarding some issues, in particular working towards the Armenian genocide allegations being recognized, supporting Armenias policy towards Karabakh and showing efforts to convince the US to provide financial aid to Armenia and Karabakh. It is quite normal for those candidates whose polling districts have a sizeable number of Armenians living there to respond positively to these questions. On the other hand, it could be understood that rather than responding to the questions, some candidates have sent a letter which entails more general statements.

These questions are also sent to presidential candidates. While the candidate of the Republicans John McCain had refrained from making certain promises during the 2008 elections, Barack Obama had made an explicit promise to recognize and work towards the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations and had repeated his stance verbally several times. However, after being elected, by taking into consideration Turkeys importance for US foreign policy, he had abandoned his promises made to the Armenians and was therefore strongly criticized by them. Hillary Clinton had also responded positively to Armenian claims during the period in which she tried to be the presidential candidate from the Democrat Party, but again after becoming Foreign Minister, had characterized the genocide allegations as a historical debate and was therefore criticized by the Armenians. Despite all their attempts, representatives of the Armenian community have not been able to meet with President Obama and Hillary Clinton within the last four years.

It has also been requested this year from candidates to respond to these questions and

from presidential candidates to receive an Armenian delegation. However, none of the two presidential candidates have responded to these claims in any way. This unusual attitude has created great surprise among the Armenians and has caused them to believe that they are not paid much attention and are even disdained.

It is normal for President Obama, who continues to be strongly criticized by the Armenians, yet on the other hand wants to further develop relations with Turkey, to not take Armenian claims into consideration. Moreover, even if the Armenians do not vote for him, since it is foreseen that he will win the votes from states like California, New York, New Jersey and even Massachusetts in which the Armenians are great in numbers, he is not dependent on the votes of Armenians.

Republican candidate Mitt Romney might not have attached importance to Armenian votes since he expects to win votes from states in which there are few Armenians. Despite serving as governor of Massachusetts in which the Armenians are relatively great in numbers, Romney is known as an individual who is not much interested with Armenian issues.
On the other hand, it is also possible that the staff of the candidates agreed not to respond to the questions or receive an Armenian delegation in order to prevent the bargains on who the Armenians will vote in favor of.

ANCA (the Armenian National Committee of America), which prepared the questions and sent them to the presidential candidates, has indicated in a declaration on 15 October 2012 that none of the presidential candidates have earned the Armenian Communitys backing for presidential elections and has not made any recommendations on who to vote for president. This stance has almost left some Armenians on their own who had always voted until now for those candidates taking Armenian claims into notice. Therefore, it is expected for the Armenians to vote, not as militants but as ordinary American citizens, in this presidential election according to the candidates policies regarding economic, social and foreign policy issues.

In its statement, ANCA has also indicated that following the elections, it will continue to make claims from the White House and other official instances concerning Armenian claims. However, just as during the period before, it also seems difficult for them to be successful on this during the next four years. In this situation, it could be understood that ANCA and other Armenian organizations will try to fulfill their claims by working towards some resolutions being adopted in the House of Representatives and the Senate just as they have done until now. This could only be possible if a sufficient number of pro-Armenian senators or members of the House wins the elections.

About the Author :

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Süleyman Nazif Sok. No: 12/B Daire 3-4 06550 Çankaya-ANKARA / TÜRKİYE
Tel: +90 (312) 438 50 23-24 • **Fax**: +90 (312) 438 50 26
@avimorgtr
https://www.facebook.com/avrasyaincelemelerimerkezi
E-Mail: info@avim.org.tr
http://avim.org.tr

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