ARMENIA'S NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ON THE TURKISH BORDER

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The technical lifespan of the nuclear energy power plant, established in 1975 at the city of Metsamor in Armenia which is thirty kilometers to the province of Iğdır bordering Turkey, has come to an end in 2005. With a decision taken on 29 November 2007, the Armenian government has approved the shutting down of the nuclear power plant, but has not disclosed a date. Following the recent nuclear power plant accident in Japan, the situation of existing nuclear power plants have come to the agenda once again for scrutiny and in this context attention has been drawn to the vulnerability of Metsamor. What is said about Metsamor is that it is one of the few old style power plants that still exist which lacks sufficient containment structures and is one of the most dangerous power plants in the world as far as its combination of design or location is concerned (is located within the seismic belts). Armenian press agencies have reported that maintenance and further continuation of the Metsamor nuclear energy power plant was discussed during the bilateral intergovernmental commission meetings which took place consecutively last week in Yerevan with Russia and with the US. It is known that the Armenian side wants and has proposed for a new power plant to be constructed. For this project which is calculated to cost around five billion dollars, it is understood that Russia has allocated one billion dollars while the responsibility of containment and security left to Armenia, whereby, the implementation of the project has been seriously overshadowed. It has been recorded that during the commission meetings, the US has proposed cooperation to Armenia regarding the issue of nuclear energy and has granted support for ten years for the existing power plant to be able to continue running. This support apparently covers an additional period of ten years to Armenia until the construction of a new plant. However, it is unclear from where, how and on which economic basis Armenia will be able to find four billion dollars for a new construction. In fact, Armenian sources also see no harm in indicating that this support is based on political motives rather than economic feasibility. There is no doubt that this issue closely concerns Turkey. Turkeys East Anatolian provinces face danger and that danger is foreseeable. This is another issue which must be discussed urgently with the Armenian side, which requires information and consultations. However, this sober attitude does not exist, that Armenia has suspended neighborly relations let alone good neighborly relations and is now guided with a policy of emotional hostility towards Turkey.

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