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THE PROTOCOLS SIGNED WITH ARMENIA

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Three years ago, on 10 October 2009, two protocols titled The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and Development of Bilateral Relations were signed between Turkey and Armenia in the city of Zurich in Switzerland by the foreign ministers of the two countries where ministers of foreign affairs of the US, Russia and Switzerland were also present.

These two protocols, the first bilateral texts signed between the two countries since the signing of the Treaties of Gyumri in December 1920 and Kars in 1921 with Armenia, following its independence in September 1991 from the disintegrated Soviet Union which was recognized by Turkey simultaneously and without discrimination with the other republics gaining their independence from the Soviet Union, have not entered into force since they have not been ratified by their respective Parliaments. For Turkey, the ratification process of the protocols in the Turkish Grand National Assembly is continuing. On the other hand, Armenia has declared with a unilateral decision in April 2010 that it has suspended the process of the ratification of the protocols in its assembly.

This initiative, which was started with the hope that it could provide an opportunity for an opening to eliminate and to resolve bilateral as well as regional tensions, lack of mutual understanding and irritations, being hampered by Armenia which would undoubtedly benefit from such a development is a dilemma difficult to fathom.

Perusing the reasoning of the decision reached by the Armenian Constitutional Court in January 2010 regarding the ratification of the protocols, it is to be seen that the Armenian side shies away from any commitments to be taken except for the opening of the borders and the establishment of diplomatic relations. This approach which does not encourage any opening or breakthrough has put on record undeniably Armenias aim which it has tried to conceal from the beginning through vague statements. (For those interested in more detailed information and evaluation of the content of the protocols, it is possible to find them in the Facts and Comments article published in the Review of Armenian Studies number 19-20 and 21 written by Director of AVIM Ambassador Ömer E. Lütem by clicking here)

The heavy burden of Turkish-Armenian relations has two dimensions to it: bilateral and regional. With the protocols, by taking a constructive step in bilateral relations, Turkey has displayed its goal to contribute to and aid regional settlement together with Armenia.

What is also expected from Armenia is to attach importance and priority to bilateral as well as regional good neighborly relations.

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