ANOTHER NUMBERS GAME BY ARMENIAN DIASPORA AND ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT

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The 6th All-Armenian Forum (Armenia - Diaspora) held in Armenia's capital Yerevan between 18 and 20 September 2017[1]. The Forum was on "Mutual Trust, Unity and Responsibility"[2] which was planned over four main issues. It has been agreed that the subjects will be monitored by the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Diaspora and the Ministries of International Economic Integration and Reform. Leaders and representatives of all Armenian educational and religious institutions were invited to the Forum. The Forum has been held since 1999. The name of the Forum has changed in time. The first three forums were organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. Since 2011, this task has been undertaken by the Diaspora Ministry of the Republic of Armenia[3].

The Forum consisting of three sessions. In the first session, Armenian President and the Armenian occupied Azerbaijan region, Nagorno Karabakh representative, Echmiadzin Catholicos II. Karekin and Cilicia Catholicos Aram I participated. Armenian Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan has attended to session two.

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said at the Forum that the Armenian government would encourage Armenians living outside to be resettled in their historic homeland. He also stated that there are efforts to increase the Armenian population in the following years. By 2040, the Armenian population is targeted to reach about four million[4]. Sarkisyan also said that there are 8-9 million Armenians throughout the world, but 3 million of them live in Armenia. However, this is not the truth. UNFAP (United Nations Forecasts Armenia Population) representative Garik Hayrapetyan and demographer Ruben Yeganyan stated that, In 2100 Armenia will have 1.8 million population, according to pessimistic projection it is likely to decrease to less than a million[5]. Today, it is possible to say that the Armenian population living in Armenia is around 2.157.270. Expert academician Professor. Dr. Gaffar Çakmaklı Mehdiyev also pointed that with seasonal workers (around 50o.ooo) this figure could reach 2.7 million in Armenia. It is also said that at least 30.ooo Armenians leave Armenia every year[6]. It is also known that the Armenian economy needs migration to survive[7].

Participants in the Forum were also skeptical about Sarkisian's words. Although extensive

legislation is passed in order to prevent external migration, President Sarkisyan apparently continues to dream an increase in the Armenian population. According to Stephan Hovakimian, representative of the Armenian labour unions in Los Angeles, Sarkisyan's words are unrealistic and he said, "I do not believe in utopias, I believe only in real work"[8].

It is known that those who defend Armenian nationalism love to play with numbers. As a matter of fact, the Armenian President is showing the same tendency and trying to show the Armenian population figures high. It can be said that this characteristic has become one of the main characteristics of Armenian nationalism, given the attitude which fixed the number of those killed in the events of 1915 at 1.5 million.

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