



BRIEF

ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION-DASHNAKTSUTYUN

(Armenian socialist party)

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Background

Founded in 1890, the programme of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutyun*) is based on social justice, democracy and national self-determination for the Armenian people.

The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun led the effort toward the establishment of the first Armenian Republic in 1918 and was the party in power for the duration of its existence. Following the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun was banned by the Communists and its leadership exiled.

In the Diaspora, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun fought Soviet rule over Armenia and championed the cause of Armenian rights and independence; it played a leading role in organizing a social and cultural framework aimed at preserving the Armenian identity.

The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun officially re-emerged in Armenia during the dissolution of the USSR, in 1990.

On December 28, 1994, the activities of the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun were "temporarily suspended" by the Armenian authorities. In view of the political nature of the anti-ARF interdictions by the Armenian authorities, the ARF continued to operate in Armenia. On February 9, 1998, less than a week after the resignation of the president of the Republic of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossian, the Justice Ministry lifted the ban on the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun.

The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun is internationally recognized as a major political force both in Armenia, Karabakh and in the Armenian communities worldwide.

ARF-Dashnaktsutyun Structure

Two years following its establishment, in 1892, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun adopted a decentralized form of structure, which has evolved according to the conditions of specific periods. Presently, the organizational structure of the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun is a decentralized worldwide structure, composed of organizational regions, each with grassroots local chapters. The local chapters annually elect their executive committees (*Gomideh*). On a regional level, at an annual or biennial regional con-

ference composed of locally elected delegates, the regional executive committee is elected. Regional conferences also elect delegates to the ARF World Congress, which is convened once every four years. The ARF World Congress is the highest policy setting organ of the party; it adopts or modifies the party's Programme, statutes (regions decide on their regional structures), and strategy of the party. The World Congress also elects the party's highest worldwide executive body, the Bureau. The regional conferences, guided by the strategy set forth by the World Congress, draw up their regional policies, which are executed by the regional executive bodies.

The ARF 31st World Congress was held in June 2011, in Armenia.

At all levels of the organization, there are functional committees and departments which deal with specific aspects of the organization.

ARF-Dashnaktsutyun Policy Principles

The basic principles of the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun strategy are:

- a. The source of ARF's strength is its ideology, its organizational structure, its individual member's commitment, its historical past and the Armenian people;
- b. The ARF is independent in its policies and practices;
- c. For the ARF, authority and attaining national leadership are not self-serving, but rather means to resolving national and social problems;
- d. For the ARF, free exchange of ideas and pluralism are basic ingredients needed to form public consensus and unity vis-à-vis issues of national importance;
- e. The ARF values the participation of all segments of society — especially women and youth — in public life;
- f. The ARF accords priority to issues of national significance as opposed to having a localized scope, which would only serve the needs of specific segments;
- g. For the ARF, building of an economically prosperous, socially just and democratic state is a guarantee for Armenia's independence and security.

The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun in Armenia

The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun's policy priorities in Armenia are:

- a. Constitutional reform to ensure the division of powers, increased levels of local self-government and the formation of a functioning national security council, which should include representatives of the large opposition parties represented in the national assembly;

- b. Political reforms, in particular in the electoral system to ensure free and fair elections and a greater role for political parties;
- c. Anti-corruption measures, including the formation of an independent anti-corruption body;
- d. Economic policy with a clear social orientation;
- e. Anti-trust policy and guarantees for free economic competition;
- f. Entrenchment in the Constitution the right of all Armenians, regardless of their place of residence, to become citizens of Armenia (Achieved in 2007).

One of the main pillars of ARF-Dashnaktsutyun policy regarding Armenia's internal affairs has been and continues to be the prevention of social, economic and political polarization in society. The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun has played and continues to play an important role in developing a political culture where authorities are accountable to the public and where the opposition is effective, active and involved.

The 2007 parliamentary elections were the third parliamentary elections the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun participated in. In the 1999 elections, the ARF garnered 84232 votes; in the 2003 elections it gained 136270 votes, and in the 2007 elections its support vote increased to 177192, 13.1% of the popular vote. Of the 122 candidates on the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun list 28 (23%) were women and 10 (8%) were non-party members. The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun ran a campaign based on an electoral platform promoting social justice, increased pensions and minimum wages to be attained through the fight against corruption and the shadow economy, as well as on economic growth based on a concerted effort to increase export oriented manufacturing. The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun faction in the National Assembly has 16 members (three are women), out of a total 131 members.¹

In the 2008 presidential elections the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun had its own candidate; ARF Bureau member and then Deputy Speaker of the ROA National Assembly Vahan Hovhannesyan was the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun candidate. With 100966 votes, he was the third runner-up.

In order to overcome, through the unity of forces, the crisis facing the country following the presidential elections and the threats to the independence and security of the two Armenian states, and with the aim of making coordinated reforms,

¹ *The National Assembly has 131 members; 41 are elected on a first win pass majoritarian system, 90 are elected on a proportional party list system. The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun faction is composed of members elected through the proportional system.*

the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun agreed with President-elect Serzh Sargsyan's proposal to join in a new governing coalition with the Republican Party of Armenia, the Prosperous Armenia Party and the Country of Law Party. As a result, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs were ARF members. In the National Assembly, one of the two Deputy Speakers, the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Chairman of the Committee on Defense, National Security and Internal Affairs were also ARF members. ARF members were appointed as head of a regional administration, also as Deputy Ministers at the Ministries of Urban Planning, Regional Government and Development, Environmental Protection as well as Communication and Transportation.

On April 27, 2009, citing "insurmountable disagreements on matters of principle [having] emerged with respect to the direction of the foreign policy," the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun announced the cessation of its participation in the political coalition. All the ARF appointed ministers, deputy ministers and the head of the regional administration resigned. The ARF members also resigned from the leadership positions they held in the National Assembly as part of the coalition agreement. Consequently, the parliamentary majority asked the ARF to continue heading the parliament's standing committees on Foreign Relations (Armen Rustamyan) and on Defense, National Security and Internal Affairs (Hrayr Karapetyan).

On October 12, 2009, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun declared that it "is steadfast in its struggle to ensure the failure of the ratification of the [recently signed Armenia-Turkey] protocols. For that objective, the Dashnaktsutyun will use all political and constitutional means all the way to regime change, if necessary." On October 23, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun unveiled a set of guidelines dealing with a variety of issues, including reforms in socio-economic, political, and electoral systems, as well as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia-Turkey relations and genocide recognition. These changes are to ensure the pursuit of a national agenda for Armenia to persevere, survive and develop.

On February 18, 2011, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun launched the "Public movement for the defense of electoral right." The aim of the movement is "to establish the authority of the people through the realization of the electoral right." The movement will have a comprehensive set of legal, political and organizational activities, which are divided to three main phases: pre-election, election day and post-election. In parallel to these, the necessary atmosphere will be created for the removal of the vicious system by which the authorities self-perpetuate themselves.

The ARF in Mountainous Karabakh (Artsakh)

In Mountainous Karabakh (Nagorno Karabakh), the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun was the political party in power during the initial years of the establishment of the Republic of Mountainous Karabakh (MKR). The first president of the Supreme Council of MKR was Arthur Mkrtchyan, an ARF member.

In December 2005, the MKR President appointed ARF member, former Acting Speaker of the MKR National Assembly and member of the National Security Council, Georgi Petrossian, as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During the July 2007 presidential elections, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun was successful in the formation of an accord among the major political parties in MKR to support a single candidate – Bako Sahakyan – who was elected president. In the newly appointed cabinet, ARF member and former Acting Speaker of the MKR National Assembly, Georgi Petrossian was reappointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, and ARF member and former Minister of Justice, Arthur Mosiyan was appointed Chairman of the MKR Control Chamber.

In the May 23, 2010, parliamentary elections the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun garnered over 20 percent of the vote and six seats (4 through the proportional system and 2 single mandate seats) in the 33 seat (17 proportional and 16 single mandate) National Assembly.

The ARF in the Diaspora

Around two-thirds of the Armenian people live in the Diaspora as a result of: a) the Genocide of the Armenians of 1915-1923; b) emigration from Soviet Armenia in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly because of political conditions; c) emigration from the Republic of Armenia in the late 1980s and 1990s, primarily due to economic hardship.

In the Armenian Diaspora, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun is the major political force with organizations and affiliates in Armenian communities in over thirty countries worldwide. The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun pursues the reorganization and revitalization of the Diaspora as a whole and the formation of new organized communities.

During the last Lebanese parliamentary elections (2009), the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun candidate Hagop Pakradounian was re-elected to the parliament. In the

cabinet of Lebanon formed in June 2011, the Minister of Industry, Vrej Sabounjian, and State Minister Panos manjian were nominated by the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun.

Current Armenian members of the Iranian parliament, Gevorg Vardanian and Robert Beglarian were also elected as candidates supported by ARF circles.

Members of the ARF are elected lay members of the Armenian Church assemblies and executive councils, as well as sports, cultural, educational, youth and professional organizations of the Armenian Diaspora.

The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun enjoys the close and immediate cooperation of several Armenian organizations in the Diaspora, including the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (headquartered in Brussels, www.eafjd.eu), the Armenian National Committee of America (headquartered in Washington, D.C., www.anca.org), the Russian-Armenian Friendship Foundation (headquartered in Moscow), the Centre for Armenian Studies (based in Tehran, www.arir.org) and the Armenian National Committee of the Middle East (headquartered in Beirut, www.ancme.net).

The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun also closely cooperates with the Armenian General Sports and Scouts Union (Homenetmen), the Hamazkayin Armenian Cultural and Educational Association and the Armenian Relief Society, all of which have chapters in Armenia and in almost all Armenian communities worldwide.

ARF Strategy and Policies

Armenia-Turkey and Armenian-Turkish Relations

a) Genocide Recognition

For the last four decades, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun and its affiliates have led the worldwide effort for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923. The ARF believes that Turkish-Armenian relations cannot develop in a healthy manner so long as Turkey continues to deny the fact of the Armenian Genocide and its responsibility in that regard. The recognition of its responsibility in the Armenian Genocide would be a minimal assurance by Turkey that it would not, once again, resort to the same methods; this will lead to a mutually beneficial dialogue.

b) *Blockade/Borders*

The blockade imposed by Turkey against Armenia since 1993 is an expression of hostility, which has been also demonstrated by the fact that Turkey has refused to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia since Armenia's independence in 1991. Turkey has set preconditions for lifting the blockade. The ARF-D's position is that Armenia should not give in to those preconditions. Hence, the ARF-Dashnaksutyun has been against the protocols signed on October 10, 2009, in Zurich, between Armenia and Turkey, because as they stand, the protocols satisfy Turkey's preconditions.

c) *Armenian Rights*

The geopolitical constraints Armenia faces today are a direct consequence of the Armenian Genocide and Turkish aggression against Armenia in 1920. Armenia and Armenians continue to have their individual, collective and national rights violated by Turkey. The ARF-Dashnaksutyun believes that Turkey should be encouraged by its allies and the international community to recognize these rights.

Karabakh (Artsakh)

Karabakh is an integral part of Armenia and the ARF has pursued its reunification with Armenia. The annexation of Karabakh to Azerbaijan was a result of arbitrary machinations by Stalin in the early 1920s and the people of Karabakh have never accepted that arrangement. Under Soviet rule, at every opportunity, and most recently in 1988, the majority of the Karabakh population had peacefully raised their quest for reunification with Armenia; Azerbaijan responded by violence not only in Karabakh, but all over Azerbaijan. In Karabakh, Armenians defended themselves and in 1991, declared the formation of the Mountainous Karabakh Republic. A just and lasting resolution of the Karabakh conflict should guarantee security and viability for Karabakh and Armenia. Eventually, the de facto reunification with Armenia should be granted de jure recognition. Attaining this recognition is a priority for the ARF-Dashnaksutyun.

Javakhk and Georgia

Another region of major concern for the ARF is the historically Armenian region of Javakhk (Samtskhe-Javakheti) in Georgia. Successive ARF World Congresses, attaching great importance to close Georgian-Armenian relations, have adopted a pragmatic approach to the resolution of political, socio-economic and cultural problems facing the Armenians of Javakhk. ARF World Congresses have

agreed with the demands raised by the Armenians of Javakhk that a Javakhk with a high degree of self-government within a federal Georgia would be able to sustain itself and would become a strong link in Georgian-Armenian relations.

ARF-Dashnaktsutyun Media

The ARF has a wide network of affiliated and/or supported media in the Diaspora and Armenia, including official daily, weekly and quarterly publications, as well as radio and television programs and multilingual websites.

Karabakh - Aparaj Weekly www.aparaj.nk.am (Armenian)

Armenia - Droshak Monthly (Armenian)

Iran - Alik Daily www.alikonline.com (Armenian)

Lebanon - Aztag Daily www.aztagdaily.com (Armenian, Arabic)

Egypt - Housaper Daily (Armenian)

Cyprus - Artsakank Monthly www.artsakank.com.cy (Armenian, English)

Greece - Azat Or Daily www.azator.gr (Armenian)

France - FRA-France www.fra-france.com (Française)

Canada - Horizon Weekly www.horizonweekly.ca (Armenian, English, Française)

USA Eastern Region - Hairenik Weekly www.hairenik.com (Armenian)

The Armenian Weekly www.armenianweekly.com (English)

USA Western Region - Asbarez Daily www.asbarez.com (Armenian, English)

Argentina - Armenia Weekly www.diarioarmenia.org.ar (Armenian, Español)

Australia - Armenia Weekly www.armenia.com.au (Armenian, English)

The Hrayr Maroukhian Foundation

In 2009, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun Supreme Council of Armenia created the Hrayr Maroukhian Foundation (www.maroukhianfoundation.org). It is a non-profit Armenian political foundation committed to the development and advancement of public policy issues; it espouses the basic values of social democracy through education, training, research, as well as regional and international cooperation.

The aims of the foundation are to contribute to and actively promote a comprehensive national, regional and international dialogue focusing on current political, economic and social developments and challenges, with a primary concentration on Armenia and the South Caucasus.

The foundation not only serves as a depository of information, but conducts studies and develops policies to assist the citizens of the Republic of Armenia in responding to the ever-changing political and social landscape both regionally and globally.

The foundation also serves as a center that studies the specific issues faced by newly independent states including democratization, labor rights, the absence of social justice, freedom of speech, foreign and security policies, current political and international events and developments as they pertain to the South Caucasus.

The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun and the Socialist International

In September 1996, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun rejoined the Socialist International, which it had originally joined in 1907. In 2003, the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun became a full member of the Socialist International, thus becoming the only party in the CIS with such a status. The ARF-Dashnaktsutyun Women's Group is a member of the SIW (Socialist International Women). During the XXIII Congress of the Socialist International, June 2008 in Athens, ARF representative Maria Titizian was elected vice-president of the organization. The SI Council in Mexico, November 2008, elected ARF Bureau member Mario Nalpatian as co-chair of the SI Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea.

The youth organization of the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun, the Armenian Youth Federation, is a full member of the IUSY (International Union of Socialist Youth) and an observer member of the ECOSY (European Community Organization of Socialist Youth).

**ARF-Dashnaksutyun Bureau
International Secretariat**

12/1 Mher Mkrtchyan
Yerevan, Armenia

Mailing address:
P.O.Box 123
Yerevan, 0010
Armenia

E-mail: intsec@arf.am
Website: www.arfd.info

Phone: +37410-52-18-90
Fax: +37410-52-14-53