

Report by Serzh Sargsyan Chairman of the Republican Party of Armenia at the 17th Party Congress

Dear colleagues,

I greet you all at the Republican Party's 17th regular congress, and wish everyone productive work.

This is a regular but not an ordinary congress: we can say without exaggeration that it is being held at a time when our state and people face serious challenges. We, the Republicans, have been at the roots of fighting for Armenia's independence, have played a key role in the state-building process and, therefore, this situation is very concerning for us and dictates certain priorities for our work.

Today, we have the opportunity and we are even bound by duty to discuss the developments that affected our state, our people and the Republican Party in the period following the previous party congress, make honest assessments and talk about the future of our state and the party.

Dear Colleagues,

Today we should not just discuss internal, partisan issues, or define and formulate our political guidelines, take note of proposals, or develop an agenda.

We cannot pay tribute to formalism and thus fake ourselves. Formalism has never been relevant to who we are. Therefore, we must record the bitter reality without mitigating words.

- The reality is that today every fifth passenger leaves Armenia with one-way ticket, and this is indeed a 'record' statistics, of course in negative sense. Hold on for a second, and try to imagine the degree of this disaster.

While we are talking about the challenges facing our country, many families are just bidding farewell to their relatives with tears in the eyes and cherish a secret hope for a safe refuge in a foreign country.

- The reality is that today almost every third citizen is poor in Armenia, and this figure has drastically worsened over the last two years. According to the World Bank's upper poverty

line, 47.6% of the population is poor in Armenia. Meanwhile, only three years ago, people had an average satisfaction of basic needs.

- The reality is that following the 44-day war 35,000 Artsakh-based Armenians, or more than 8,000 families were left homeless as their homes went under the control of Azerbaijan. This is not just naked statistics: this is human destinies, family cemeteries lost to the enemy, childhood memories, lost fortune and jeopardized identity.

- The reality is that 5,000 families lost their hope in the 44-day war as many of those killed in the war were the only breadwinner in the family. Around 5,000 young people did not celebrate their wedding; 5,000 Armenian families never established, and no children were born. This demographic tragedy was exacerbated by the global pandemic, which took thousands of innocent lives and left bitter statistics and distorted destinies.

At the end of 2020 the lowest 70-year demographic curve was registered in Armenia because the rate of deaths and births had almost equaled. That is indeed a huge catastrophe. This anti-national government of individuals without sense of homelands 'washed their hands' like Pontius Pilate did by turning their backs on our compatriots, leaving our soldiers alone on the battlefield. With the families of these soldiers they tried to justify their own inaptitude by calling the Armenian soldiers deserters, while the healthcare system's failures were represented as an international norm.

The data for this year is yet to be summarised obviously, but the first 10 months of 2021 compared to the same period of last year yielded death rate increase by 6.3 percent.

- The reality is that our society is polarized, demoralized and hurt today more than ever. Surveys have shown that about 70% of citizens are not interested in political processes. People have become indifferent and refuse to face reality by virtue of their self-defense instinct. Can we blame our compatriots for despair? Have we been able to give hope in their hearts with our actions? We have a share of responsibility in this matter, and we will talk about it today indeed.

- The reality is that our hard-earned national security, our diplomatic, military, and no less important digital sovereignty have been dilapidated.

- The reality is, our country partakes in the negotiations as an economic and legal entity, while we are a nation-state with our distinct national identity. They can dull the vigilance of people with different propaganda tricks, feed them with epic lies and keep in the so-called digital 'Matrix' – one where the yogurt is black and the political leader is making victories only with a "strict" look. None of this can last long. You cannot make fools of people permanently; you should not hide behind disappointed and discouraged people to protect yourself from words of reason and common sense.

- The reality is that as a result of a nationwide disaster they are trying to remove human dignity from the national agenda in our country. Who is the man without dignity? Note that dignity is not just a word. It is an inalienable human right. They are trying to deprive our compatriots of this right following the act of capitulation, exacerbated by national humiliation and the lack of security guarantees, when political opponents and their supporters are deprived of their right to private life and wiretaped routinely.

When the family of a fallen soldier is kept waiting for hours in order to get what the state owes them. When compensation from the Insurance Foundation for the Servicemen, funded by taxpayer money and donors, is delivered as a personal favor of the capitulant for which a mourning woman has to stand before the camera and thank the authorities. By the way, this is the same foundation for which we have been severely criticized by the representatives of the current regime who are shamelessly wasting what others have created. Dignity is an inalienable right, the absence of which gives birth to an indifferent and demoralized society, which becomes unable to act even from the instinctive position of its own security. The psychology of capitulation yields to decaying societies.

This is the bitter reality. It hurts to say it. But living in it just drives people crazy. Still we must talk about problems not for mourning, but for recovery. HOPING for recovery, so to speak. On the way to this recovery of hope for the future of our country, we must analyze the problems soberly by accepting our share of past failures with honesty and courage, and taking our share of responsibility for this path of hope.

Today and here I want to be open and clear, if you want - even vulnerably open and straightforward. I have not yet overcome the pain of my personal losses, but I am standing in front of you realizing that I cannot disengage and quit at this crucial stage when our our endangered independent statehood is falling apart. You cannot be offended of your homeland. Neither be offended of your people. Even when you are not yet fully understood.

With my comrades-in-arms, with the parents of many of you here we have gone through a lot, a whole way to life and death; we died with every fallen soldier on the battlefield and reborn with every defended height.

For many years the hidden wishes and enthusiasm that have been covertly nurtured by some circles alleging to “Yield Artsakh and live better” destroyed the foundations of our thirty-year independence. The issue of Artsakh has been and remains an existential one for our people, the cornerstone of our ethnic identity as a sovereign entity. Unfortunately, our people had to go through a whole bloody war with many losses to realize this.

Today, there are 85 nations worldwide with a population of 3 to 30 million that have a language, culture, religion, but they have no statehood. Do we really want to join their ranks

by giving to oblivion the blood shed by our fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives for independence?

My comrades-in-arms and I have never sought refuge in a bunker. Our generation believed that honoring the duty before the homeland was not heroism. Protecting the security of our people has been our duty and service. Our generation believed that deeds would speak for themselves. At the same time, in terms of international relations, it should be noted that there have been no victories and territorial gains after World War II without falling under international sanctions regime. How come we failed to clearly explain to our people the importance of such a fortune? Instead, the idea of “let us yield and live better” was being widely advertised in our country.

Not that I want to, but let me just ask: are doing better now?

Dear Colleagues,

This congress is also a unique watershed moment. Today and here, we, as a political force, will mark the end of this stage of our self-cleansing process. By the results of our elections we will reaffirm the determination of those Republicans who are standing firm in the defense of our shared values, and we will bid farewell to those party members unprepared to continue struggling together in the political trenches. They cannot have a place in our ranks. It may seem that in the past three years we have already gone through the most difficult trials. But no, dear friends, sure you understand that the most difficult times are not behind yet. We, as a political force, must be ready to stand up and fight back vehemently against those scoundrels that are sleepwalking our state and the future of our children to complete destruction. Each of you here and thousands of Republicans outside this hall should ask themselves and answer honestly whether they are ready for sacrifices. The following responses shall be seen as the condition for remaining in the party ranks:

- Yes, we are ready to protect our national values for good;
- Yes, we will not retreat from struggling for security and sovereignty of Armenia and Artsakh;
- Yes, we will defend our language, culture and the Church against the onslaught of alien elements;
- Yes, we will protect our national dignity, our holy land and the state, and not let down the memory of the fallen heroes martyred for our land and the statehood.

The Republican party is holding this congress in a new status, in political opposition, unlike the previous ones. Accordingly, this time the reports will be largely different from the reports made at our previous regular party gatherings where we presented our priorities of state policy in different areas and the steps taken to implement them.

Being a member of a ruling party is completely different from acting in opposition. This is true not only for the Republican Party. Neither it is just an Armenian experience. All of you here and thousands of our fellow party members have gone through this transformation or, if you will, a unique test. Some yielded under pressure and this pressure was a fierce one under indiscriminate attacks by the populist authorities, one that was featured with clear lawlessness, political persecution, defamation and targeting of families and children. Not everyone was ready to endure, fight back and keep up the spirit of resistance. Some others were simply opportunists that prefer to be in comfort and who at most trying times abandon their political family to serve their private interests and seeking personal comfort elsewhere. Regretfully, the Republican Party was not without such people in our ranks.

This was a process that we all had to endure before we were able to consolidate. I will not discuss that unfortunate type of people, as they have always existed in the history of mankind and will continue to be in many places. Same as many other flimsy phenomena that we must face and prevail permanently.

Numerous important issues have piled up over the past five years, some of which we have addressed in the course of the past period. We have also issued a few dozens of political statements as the situation continued to evolve in the country. This regular congress is an opportunity to summarize the path we have covered, and respond in greater detail to the issues of paramount interest to you and to our society. After all, what has happened in the past five years? Why and how could the populists manage to come to power in our country? What is going on in our state now? What serious issues we are facing and what are the security challenges threatening Armenia and Artsakh? What is the geopolitical environment we find ourselves in? What shall be done to prevent the national decay and disunion, the depletion of the great potential of our national worldwide that has always been united in the issues of pan-Armenian significance? How to roll back the current trend of downward spiral?

As you see, I am not delivering a ceremonial speech at this congress, but talking to you in a straightforward manner and I expect you will reciprocate.

It will hardly be any exaggeration to say that the past period has been the most difficult one in the history of our people and the party.

So let me start by thanking all devoted party members and dedicated supporters, owing to whom the Republican Party remained in Armenia's political life in spite of numerous illegalities committed by the ruling regime, including their perverse inclination to get the

law-enforcement agencies to serve their private interests. Today the Republican party remains one of the champions in the struggle for the sovereignty and security of both Armenia and Artsakh. None of us has forgotten that the Republicans and our supporters used to be the sole target of this anti-national junta when they were seizing power, long before certain political forces and individuals began to understand the real motives of the so-called 'velvet' so-called 'revolution', and as they say – began judging the tree by its fruits.

In the course of these five years we have witnessed unprecedented degree of ups and downs. We have seen both a country with its clear standing and role, as well as enjoyed respect in the international community, exhibited national dignity and had stable progress of a victorious nations. We have also witnessed, unfortunately, the catastrophic policies of these populists that deceived our people three and a half years ago by clearly demonstrated support of foreign powers and regime change technologies successfully employed in other countries. These people have trampled our national values, intentionally undermined and weakened the foundations of our statehood, seeded division and demoralized our society so deeply that this Overton window, widely opened by these calamitous authorities, is pouring anti-state and anti-national narratives on a daily basis with no unified pushback of our people or any criticism, unlike what we had as a healthy society with a sense of national dignity before.

This is something called “loser’s psychology”. These capitulator authorities are aggravating the situation intentionally: they are trying to demoralize the nation and the society; they are trying to curb the national resistance with false calls for “peace,” instill fears and reduce the national self-esteem by gravely minimising our past victories and forcing our people to bend before the enemy in embarrassing scenes.

At some point this chain of events became a monstrous mechanism for self-destruction of our nation. This clock started ticking in April 2018, but in fact it was winded well before and by gradually poisoning the society it approached the day when it was launched. In the course of the past three and a half years I have had various opportunities in different formats – like interviews, press conferences, briefings, speeches, partisan events and other meetings – to speak about these issues and present my views. Today I will reiterate some of the important viewpoints expressed earlier.

I resigned in 2018 wishing peace, harmony and sense of reason to the country. I left to pacify our people, which had been deceived, manipulated and poisoned with great portions of lies and disinformation by these populists and their foreign sponsors which had clearly geopolitical goals. I left not to allow bloodshed in our country and to give opportunity for the thousands of people in the square to build the country of their dreams and to continue with the same enthusiasm and demand the would-be government to honor every promise they gave and be accountable to the people. I would only be happy if that was the case, and if

peace, harmony and sense of reason ruled in the country. All of this has, unfortunately, been reduced to zero in the past three and a half years.

Today many people can see the real goals behind the veil of so-called “velvet and people’s revolution”. Obviously I was standing in the way of those who proposed a heavy dilemma at the hands of these puppets: either to resign or to stay in power by using force in my own country and allowing a bloodshed. It is not difficult to imagine the scenarios that the screenwriters or real beneficiaries of this so-called “revolution” would have for Armenia – calling its leader a dictator, labeling us as rogue state etc, would trigger new waves of protests to bring instability to continue pushing for my resignation. These people would be utmost disinterested in the fact that domestic instability seriously increased the external threat level, that it instantly was bringing more escalation on the border and the enemy was ready to seize such opportunities. They could not care less, but even maybe intentionally pursued this goal. But I did care. And took due consideration of all of it.

Our government was standing in the way of all those, whose thinking about Artsakh and the future of Armenia did not match with ours. We did not belong to anyone, we were native and pursued our own national interests – something not in tune with their aspirations. My goal in 2018 was not clinging to power. My goal was to protect Artsakh, and by extension – also Armenia. I was nominated for the position of the Prime Minister only and purely to further strengthen our already strong negotiating positions in the peace process and try to avert the tragedy we are living through today. Wasn’t it clear enough that unfavorable resolution of the Artsakh issue would cost dearly on Armenia too? I was convinced in that and pursuing exactly that, whereas I was accused of desiring to remain in power forever, and did everything possible to remove me.

These days I am still being asked – why have I not used force against the protesters? I said in the past, and reiterate now: it’s easy to be talking tall retrospectively. It’s genuinely easy to, at first, say that it was due to my decision not to use force in 2018 which allowed for a bloodless transition from that chaos and it was right, and now, witnessing the consequences of that power grab, change hearts and say it was wrong. I assure you all – no foreign actor can achieve any success in your country if it does not have supporters internally, some sort of a Trojan horse to ruin our house from within using our own hands. Unfortunately, there were such players internally, and the deceived public followed their lead.

Even today and even it’s too late after seeing so many disasters and destruction our society is able to thwart the scenarios of those with distinct geopolitical interests – by standing up to it, by demonstrating its unity and strength in the protection of our national interests. We need to realize that every belated move, each next day takes us closer to a new impending danger.

Months after the power grab, during the snap parliamentary elections, we were ringing this alarm bell. Almost alone in the beginning and later with a number of other forces we were

yelling, crying, proving and begging our people – to sober up and prevent the disaster before it's too late. You should remember that our slogan at the December 2018 snap parliamentary elections was “If you are concerned about Armenia's security, about the future of Artsakh – vote for Republican!”. Sadly, the biblical truth was proven right again: “no prophet is welcome in his hometown”. The results of latest elections again testified to the fact that our society had not fully realized the extent of everything that happened in this period.

I have no purpose of relaying the problems, wrongdoings and mistakes on others. I understand and in numerous occasions – unlike many others – I have acknowledged that during my tenure there were many mistakes and omissions. I know many issues were being resolved quite slowly. I am aware that our fellow compatriots had higher expectations. That there was injustice and perceptions of sizeable corruption. That I had not shown enough harshness against those who found refuge in our ranks and were using our name to increase their power or pile up personal wealth. That I have not always been open enough and clear enough talking to our people. That I have underestimated the role of new technological networks of mass influence. That I have not paid enough attention to a number of domestic problems, preferring instead to focus generally on defense and national security. That I have in some cases – in fact many cases - trusted people who did not deserve that. And as a consequence – have overestimated the degree of manageability of the governance system.

Some people can continue this series of issues and attribute to me or all of us a variety of real or imaginary mistakes. Perhaps, it's easier to live when you can blame your own mistakes and existing issues on everyone else, but not yourself. When everything, in your opinion, “is because of Serzh”, you can continue doping your own conscience and escape from your own share of responsibility for the future, right?

I have acknowledged my own mistakes, and am ready to do that again. And here I want to refer to certain circles: do not try to attribute your mistake to me, please. I did not force you to become part of this adventurism and then go and kiss the forehead of the loudest animal in the herd – the donkey. And thereafter develop myths that I have cut a deal and handed over power to that man, or that I cooperate with him and other such nonsensical narratives.

Further on, I ask and encourage you all to stop berating the participants of this so-called revolution. There were many people with good intentions among them, who believed that we would have a better homeland that way. In this difficult period for our homeland we absolutely must do everything necessary to restore national unity.

Now, let me turn to our party issues.

You know well that during our time in government I have always treated with suspicion the reportedly growing numbers of our party membership. I didn't think it coincided with the numbers of devoted Republicans. Like in many post-Soviet countries, we unfortunately

could not avoid bureaucratization, artificially inflating our party, as well as from opportunists. I treat them as “transit passengers”, who did not endure the trying times. They thought the ship of Republicans was sinking for good, thought that “the king is dead” and that it was time to shout “long live” the next king. You know, there was an interesting pattern in all this: those who caused most criticism about the Republican party, were the first to abandon us and find new safe havens for themselves.

There have also been thousands of regular people who were being listed en masse as new party members by some of our former colleagues. They thought it was impressive for me. At the end of the day, the party had a self-cleaning issue – both in terms of inflated numbers and the structure. You know that a few months ago we initiated a recount of our party ranks, as well as reform process of our local bodies and overall infrastructure. At present in our activities, more than ever, we stress on strong ideological basis and continuity. And I am more than sure that it is our national conservatism that will become the necessary foundation that will help to rebuild Armenia and keep Artsakh Armenian.

The Republican party has been and continues to be the party with widest international connections in our country, which has always been, is and will be put to serve our national interest. Even being out of government we have done more for the protection of our interests abroad, than the entire ‘wardrobe of backpacks’ together with their storekeeper.

For the future activities of our party I prioritize the following directions, which once I have had a chance to lay out at the recent joint event with Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Let me list those in a nutshell:

1. Developing and strengthening the level of professionalism of the party governance body;
2. Optimising the regional bodies and improving their efficiency;
3. Ensuring the mutual dependance between the numbers of the membership and their active duty;
4. Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the foreign engagements of the party;
5. Harmonisation between the party values and our activities;
6. Maintaining and strengthening the internal democracy in the party.

Efforts aimed at discovering the potential of the youth, students and the women, and their better engagement with the party will continue to remain priorities for us. Similarly, we will continue seeking solutions to issues of concern for the public, as well as engage in honest and open daily interactions with the people.

It is not any priority for our party today to achieve power. Like other mainstream parties we will seek to form government in order to implement our party programs, fulfill our promises made to the people only after we depose this capitulant – jointly with other healthy political

forces. This will give Armenia a chance to stand up from its knees, straighten our back, become stronger and once again hold the back of Artsakh and serve as its security guarantor.

I am saying this so that once again the opportunist thugs will not try again to squeeze into our ranks and so that they understand that only those can become Republican party member who prioritise the statehood over holding power, and sense of dignity – over holding official positions at any cost.

The Republicans do not want power today, but we want Armenia to maintain a sovereign statehood.

You have perhaps noticed that the Republican party has recently offered more active role to the young party members. As you see, two of them are moderating the party congress with me, while tens of active and devoted young people are in the hall and thousands outside of these walls.

Despite the fact that the Republican party have been the first officially registered socio-political organisation in Armenia, our rank and file are relatively young. Around 50% of those who applied for membership since 2018 are young men and women. They tie their dreams of living in strong and developed Armenia with the Republican party and are ready to put their energy and efforts in service of this objective. We have no right to let them down. We can affirmatively say that the Republican party is among those in Armenia that are becoming younger.

You may recall that our youth was at the epicenter of post-November 10 developments in Armenia last year. Dear young party members, I promise to you that no cold winter night spent in that tent and no other peaceful civil disobedience effort against this capitulators' regime, which they were trying to violently suppress, has been in vain. For being in the forefront of this difficult, but honorable struggle not only I am expressing my appreciation, but also the next generations will – years later when they will learn the history lessons in the textbooks.

The founding fathers of our party – Ashot Navasardyan, Andranik Margaryan and other fellow members of our party have devoted their youthful years to the national liberation struggle and the cause of state-building. Being a Republican is a demanding responsibility which entails self-sacrifice and hard work. You simply must become an example and torch bearer of national conservative values in your respective communities. Conservatism is not about worshipping the age-old matters, it's neither backward-looking like you are being continuously propagated from various corners. The goal of this propaganda effort is to uproot our people from its historical origins. You also should keep in mind that the political party which has many devoted and hard-working young members is destined to succeed.

Our party approach towards the youth is also reflected in the suggested draft statutory changes, which I hope will be approved. We propose the establishment of a new party body – a student organisation. My colleagues will present this in greater detail shortly. I shall only underline that the students have always been the driving engine of the political processes. I rest assured that this new body will unite great numbers of students with firm national-conservative values.

In the previous two congresses we have highlighted the establishment and the development of party school after Andranik Margaryan. This school has already accumulated an alumni network of 600 graduates and 100 participants in the current period.

In the past few years we have paid serious attention to offering professional training not only to our fellow party members, but also across the country to educate politically mature, knowledgeable and competitive human resources and continuously invest in their professional development. Our political school after Andranik Margaryan has greatly contributed to these efforts by having become a well established, recognizable institution for non-formal quality education. Our graduates – and among them representatives of many other political parties and non-partisan youth – have played active roles in the socio-political life of our country in their respective fields, many of whom are civil servants, parliamentarians, NGO leaders etc.

We will continue to develop our political school and its efforts shall be made visible in our society. We believe that the future achievements of the Republican party are greatly dependant on the existance of demanding and politically literate voter. You know I have delivered remarks for all cohorts of our school. This gives me many reasons to say that we have excellent young people.

Dear colleagues,

Now let me turn to the Third Artsakh war, some of its circumstances and consequences.

In 2020 our people faced a catastrophe that was unleashed by Azerbaijan with full support of Turkey behind its back.

A year ago armed drones were swirling over our heads – not to film a wedding or music festival, but to take human lives. Our children and grandchildren were thinking not about university admissions or falling in love, but about surviving in that human flesh grinder and protecting our homeland in the war, where many prohibited weapons were also used.

Why did that war begin? And what negotiation package did we inherit to these incompetent people with no sense of homeland?

Let me reiterate here what I have said many times: I have always been in favor of compromise option for the peaceful resolution of the Artsakh issue – within a framework of red lines well perceived by us and the international community. That red line, drawn with the blood and dignity of the Armenian people, is the right to self-determination of the people of Artsakh. I have engaged in continuous negotiations for ten years on the basis of one supreme principle, which is – what are we going to get, not what we are yielding. In all the negotiation documents we have consistently developed the detailed mechanisms, processes and essential international guarantees for the implementation of the right of people of Artsakh for self-determination. I left such a package where all vital interests of our people had been fully protected, where Artsakh’s Armenianness in the future was guaranteed and it was acceptable for the international community as a whole and the co-chair states of the OSCE Minsk Group in particular. We had a strong voice in the diplomatic front and our positions were solid not only because of negotiation skills, or deep understanding of the nuances of Artsakh issue, or well-oiled work with the great powers, but also because of our glorious army, which had been victorious in the first war, and which was undergoing continuous modernisation, working on its mistakes and due to its patriotic spirit was ready to force the adversary back to the negotiation table each time after a good slap on its face in the frontline.

I have never played the fool in the peace process, unlike what this capitulant was stupidly boasting in the internal meetings due to his provincialism. Instead, with other colleagues we have negotiated with sense of dignity and faithfully. Armenia has been a regional player in those years, full-fledged participant in relevant processes in the international community, a sovereign nation with strong core, legitimate aspirations and powerful army. Whereas this provincial charlatan thought that after deceiving the Armenian people he will trick the rest in the international community with similar success. A person who aspired to begin negotiations from “his own chapter”, the author of “I negotiate what I want to negotiate” cynical statement, someone who preferred to learn about the negotiation history from our enemy, who brought forward unnecessary conditions before the co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group, and as a result lost the support of our allies and partners, has shepherded the negotiation process to a deadlock and ruined the diplomatic trenches we digged and improved over years of intensive hard work, and brought war and catastrophe to our people as a result of all these. This is so vivid, so obvious and easily proved, that I can openly answer three more questions that our people seem to be concerned about:

- Could this war be averted?
- Yes, I think this war could be averted.
- If, nevertheless, armed hostilities did begin, could we possibly avoid having so many losses?
- Yes, we certainly could have avoided such tragic losses.

- Could we possibly neutralise the new threats after November 9 ?
- Yes, that too was possible. For example, the territorial concessions based on verbal agreements were a sign of shameful cowardice; not pursuing the POW-related paragraph 8 of the November 9 statement and instead calling all of them deserters only to avoid responsibility was a sign of barbarity, and finally – incidents leading to more than 80 new POWs in a situation of ceasefire were a result of impotence. Immediately after the war these capitulative authorities began glorifying our sons who were captured by the enemy, then were giving false promises to their families and relatives on the eve of the snap elections and urged them to wait for a few more months and promised to repatriate all those heroes later. A few more months passed, even a year, and having done literally nothing on their own, now they are meanly declaring that it should now be investigated in what circumstances those had been captured because possibly now they are deserters. Why did they not tell this a year ago? Why are they now blaming their own impotence onto our soldiers? Is this yet another scene in their scenario of fully undermining and discrediting our army?

One more question, that our society is concerned about, is whether there had been any treason.

Yes, there was. Since they were ignorant to the extent of treason, treasonously careless, treasonously blind and deaf, treasonously anti-national and without sense of homeland and, meantime, treasonously arrogant and proud. I am sure that the whole truth about the Third Artsakh war will inevitably resurface and the state criminals will be subject to the most deserving punishment available to them. Only in that case the revenge for our sons buried in the Yerablur and other cemeteries across Armenian and Artsakh cities and towns will be taken. The pressure of their tombstones, erected to immortalize their memory in their homeland, will be a little alleviated, and the tears of those mourning their loss will not be this bitter.

Eternal glory to all our fallen martyrs and glory to their feats. We bow to their memory. Let us honor the memory of those fallen for our Homeland with a minute of silence.

The Armenian people has got questions not only about domestic issues, which are about who, why and how caused this war. Our people also has questions for those out of our country – which is why and how the civilized world of the 21st century has tolerated and thus indirectly encouraged the Azero-Turkish war crimes against our people, grave violations of internationally recognised human rights of those fallen victim of this aggression in Artsakh and Armenia. Thousands of irrefutable pieces of evidence have been published to testify all that.

New wars can and must be prevented, yet for that purpose we shall first and foremost look at the realities with open eyes and in a straightforward manner, speak about those issues

honestly and be righteous when dealing with irrefutable pieces of evidence. More importantly, act before speaking, act without delay since thousands of human lives just depend on it.

The Armenian people aspire for sustainable peace in the South Caucasus. We want stability and development based on norms of international law, mutual compromises and dignity, and not based on the ideas of those considering that the issue is resolved militarily and for good and Armenians have to be put into ghettos.

Today, more than a year after the 44-day war, the evolving situation around Syunik and not only is very troubling. The violations of the Armenian territorial integrity are reprehensible. These events unfolded this way because of the capitulative and disgraceful authorities and their criminal inaction, wrong assessment of the situation, the deep crisis of their own making in the state governance and national security systems, as well as the calamitous situation caused by the latest war. These individuals still fail to understand, that the words of the state official and especially high-level officials are heard not only in Armenia, but well beyond our borders. There are numerous cases when the short-sighted thoughts of these individuals, as well as their stupid claims meant to cover up for the fatal mistakes made, are thereafter being used and cited against the interests of the Republic of Armenia.

In these circumstances, when our society is yet being unable to recover from the after-war shocks, fears and stress disorders, and is eventually becoming conformist and adopting a role of a passive bystander, the political forces and their leaders, as well as their supporters and foremost the patriotic young people have to shift this mood in the country. They have a lot to do to help our society out of this dangerous coma.

These anti-national populists, who came to power riding on the wave of people's emotions, expectations and excitement, very quickly abandoned their promises and by the most heinous methods and anti-Constitutional steps began demolishing our statehood.

It's well known and well documented in human history – populists are only one step away from establishing dictatorship.

In order to cover up their own failures and continuously feed people with fakes and falsehoods, these incapable to govern, illiterate and arrogant populists employ the age-old method of throwing into public discourse this thesis of “blame everything on the former regime”. They do this only to win more time to consolidate their power for further establishment of authoritarian rule – meant to help them avoid responsibility. They are no more content with capturing the executive and legislative branches of power. They have been attacking the judiciary and the media for a long time. By endlessly manipulating with references to the people, alleging to serve the people and be accountable to them, these

individuals very quickly began making decisions behind the back of the people, hold secret negotiations and still cynically declare “we do what we please”.

The lawless and anti-Constitutional moves by the incumbent regime have long been taking place in the shadow of the scared and fearful positioning of the Office of the President, their criminal silence and in some cases even in partnership with them. Same can be said about international and local relevant organisations, diplomatic corps, which have so far tolerated their clear-cut anti-democratic and lawless decisions and actions. In contrast, years ago they would have exaggerated anything, would raise a lot of noise in international forums, issue reports and make interviews. Is this any coincidence? Have they not been encouraging all this with their positioning? What is the price for this silence? Not sure about them, but for us, our people and the state, this has cost dearly – including the loss of a part of our homeland, loss of thousands of lives of young people, and big blow to Armenian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The end result is, that the individual who allegedly had a “not-an-inch” positioning, has given up everything and still continues to yield more. Yielding everything is easy for that man, since it was not his blood spilled, nor that of his friends for liberating all those lands. Since in his soul homeland is not the highest value, since his office, personal welfare, sick ambitions and material gains are prioritised over ancestral home, the graveyards of grandparents, school of his children and the temples of God.

It’s easy for him, yes. But what about you, my dear people? Is it easy to follow how you are being sold in geopolitical closeout sales? Is it easy to follow how the daily path of your children to schools passes under the watch and guns of Azeri soldiers? Is it easy to follow how the blood spilled by your sons is being reduced to nothing, or put more properly – reduced to oil and petroleum? How they are trying to turn our ancient people into a community of unthinking slaves, into a community of mankurts...

After all this someone who has never fought for peace, has no idea of its price, plays the role of a peace-lover. Someone who never went through a war, and has caused a calamitous war instead. The enemy has put his sword on our throat, taken away of his victory they are now demanding the whole of Armenia, while these disgraceful individuals are on their knees begging for peace from the executioners of our sons, the same executioners that are still torturing and killing Armenian POWs in complete disregard of international law and norms of human morality.

So here we declare:

- The Armenians are peace-loving people, but we will never beg for peace by humiliating terms, and will achieve a dignified peace.

- We will not allow these treasonous land-yielders to justify their anti-national and anti-state decisions with endlessly manipulating our people that is deceived, disappointed and depressed by this loss in the war.

The Republican party, like throughout its existence and whenever our statehood was endangered, had always been in the forefront and continues to stand there, something that has earned us the targeting of internal adversaries and external enemies.

Dear colleagues,

We live in new and very active period of geopolitical shifts, when we witness very active processes unfolding before our eyes both among great powers and regional powerful states, which causes shifts in the existing balance of power and emergence of new spheres of influence. Such massive changes inevitably trigger new crises and increase risks of unpredictable developments. Conflicts escalate in various corners of the world, new sources of escalation add up to the traditional hotbeds of tension and none of this is a source of optimism.

In the present geopolitical realities our regional issues are no more interesting for external players, than their own troubles. We can not go against the logic of developments in global politics and demand the international community to solve our own troubles in our stead. This realization of this simple piece of truth has to be put in the policy foundations of any reasonable government. In contrast, those states or governments that disregarded this truism have endured tragic consequences of historical proportions.

In the past 100 years such massive changes worldwide took place in the course of First and Second World Wars, as well as following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Around 100 years ago, despite all difficulties and hardship, we succeeded in restoring Armenian statehood. Meanwhile, because of failure to appreciate the geopolitical and regional processes, failure to fairly evaluate our own resources, because of inexperience and internal divisions shortly after the independence we faced great

losses. The failure to learn the lessons of one's own mistakes is fraught with recurrence of new disasters.

In times of global shifts, by and large, only those states are being able to position themselves right, which succeed to maintain balance in a difficult geopolitical environment due to flexible diplomacy and well-calculated moves. In contrast, trying to make the whole world take steps towards your arbitrary and often unfounded preferences yields dramatic results. You must walk in sync with global and regional processes. Since the declaration of independence of the Third Republic, Armenia had done exactly this, whereas the small problems did not have big impact on this movement. As a result, we had two sustainable and developing Armenian states, we enjoyed respect in the world as a victorious nation and had been a well-perceived and predictable partner for our friends.

Unfortunately, in the past few years our country has deviated from this simple logic and has chosen an impenetrable and dangerous path. Because of the short-sighted and opportunistic steps taken by the incumbent regime Armenia has lost its former prestige. We have instead become yet another headache for the world, in need for relief and help. Oddly, such expectations of ours are at times being expressed in obscure ambitions and rhetorics, or in other circumstances by humiliating and pitiful readiness to yield on its national interests. This is a road to nowhere. This is generally questioning the viability of our statehood and the people.

We must realize that only strong, sovereign and dignified Armenia can be a respected and a trustworthy partner in the world.

The global COVID-19 pandemic adds up to the problems described above. This so far has been not just public health, but also a serious security challenge for all the states in the world, and especially for those lacking potent and irresponsible authorities able to govern in crisis situations. Armenian incumbent authorities are one of those poor cases. Since the very beginning of the pandemic they have adopted such an unserious and irresponsible approach and policies, that people failed to appreciate the whole seriousness of the threats. The irresponsible behaviour of the stupid leader, absurd decisions, belated excuses and the initiated policies in crisis situation

not only failed to produce the desired results, but also threw Armenia in the ranks of nations that had suffered this pandemic the most.

Only months after the disastrous war, in that most difficult period for our homeland we were forced by these capitulative authorities to go through snap parliamentary elections. I have already said on one occasion that those snap elections were neither our objective nor our dream. This government of these capitulants, who love their offices more than our homeland, unfortunately, did not resign and instead chose to lead the psychologically distressed people into a new shakeup – snap nationwide elections. The developments in the political field led to a situation, where we were forced to run in these elections, forming the “I have honor” electoral bloc with Homeland Party. The outcome of these elections was rather predictable for us given our own evaluation of the situation. Nevertheless, it was still painful for us to witness a sizeable segment of our people being again manipulated by lies, deception, threats of persecution and other ills, instead of throwing the capitulative regime out of the political field and triggering responsibility mechanisms against them for the catastrophe and destruction they had caused.

Despite the wishes of those willing to see the Republican party pushed to the margins, we re-entered the parliament after two years of break. This was achieved despite widely applied government pressure, unwarranted intrusion into our offices, instigating violence, widespread threats and the environment of hatred where the elections were held.

In such a situation, regardless of the small size of our parliamentary faction, in the frameworks of the National Assembly we continue with our colleagues to struggle against these capitulator authorities pursuing their removal a moment earlier. This is in addition to the efforts outside of the parliamentary format.

There are various opinions about the effectiveness of our parliamentarians in this National Assembly with a ruling majority of anti-national elements. We are receptive of the viewpoints of our electorate, as well as their often well-deserved criticism and the demands laid before our MPs. Not once we have declared that our MPs are not clinging to their mandates and in the right moment they are ready to resign in order to continue the struggle with our colleagues outside of the parliament.

“What will come after all this? Is it possible to change anything? And what shall be done for that?” – these are some of the questions asked in every corner these days.

First of all – do not come to terms with this situation, and do not continue living with the mindset that nothing can be changed. We must shrug off the loser psychology and first of all strengthen our spirit, regain faith in our powers and the future of our homeland.

Second – develop your skills and knowledge on a daily basis and make continuous education part of your life. Strive to achieve more and better, become smarter and stronger, since all that is an important precondition to be most helpful to your homeland and serve it with dignity.

Third – look at the reality with open eyes and evaluate everything with clearly established facts, and not under the influence of manipulative statements. Draw correct inferences from your analysis, because it is very important for avoiding same and often fatal mistakes. Don't deceive yourself with illusions that someone will solve our problems instead of us.

Fourth – never cease using all opportunities, I repeat, all and every opportunities to struggle against the anti-national, treasonous forces. In the meantime, engage with the youth and educate them with our national spirit. Bear in mind that even those young graduates of the best universities in the world who lack the sense of homeland in their heart and mind, who lack sense of national dignity - are completely useless in our national struggle.

We absolutely must re-emerge again as a viable nation. The path, that I am suggesting here to achieve this goal, has been tested by many nations who succeeded in creating great states. Relentless struggle and hard work – this is the formula, that has proven to be most viable throughout human history. We cannot start this journey in pursuit of the stated goal with laziness, arrogance, despair or vainglory. These are pernicious sins.

It's crucial that we declare the following guidelines for our future work:

- Zero hopelessness, since in the present situation that would be a sin not only against the God, but also our homeland;
- Zero tolerance towards the treasonous junta, since there is no single common pathway that we may share with those who brought Armenia and Artsakh to this sorry state and those who ruined our national army;
- Zero ambition, since for the sake of our homeland every one of us must absolutely put aside their personal ambitions, sympathies or the lack thereof.

Fellow Armenians,

I know it is not easy for you to bear this dishonor. As a nation we are not tailored to tolerate dishonor at any rate. And today my comrades in arms and I, the Republican party of Armenia are here to tell you that we are by your side, we are your sons and daughters, your soldiers and your diplomats – and we are ready to endure everything for the sake of restoring your honor and dignity.

May God protect our people and support our efforts in the name of our homeland.

I thank you for your attention.