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‘Turkey, Armenia need to sign new protocol’

▶ If Turkey and Armenia sign a new, simple protocol to have diplomatic relations and an open border, they would be more successful in achieving it, said an Armenian observer.

Gegham Manukyan, a former member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak Party), told Today’s Zaman that Turkey and Armenia cannot revive the protocols signed in Zurich on Oct. 10, 2009. “They need a simple protocol, and it should be about just two issues: opening the border and establishing diplomatic relations,” he said when he was in İstanbul on Thursday for a panel discussion on Turkey-Armenia relations at İstanbul Kültür University.

Manukyan said the estranged neighbors’ other problems could be solved later, maybe by different agreements, but not all at once. “They should adapt a step-by-step approach,” he said.

Turkey closed its borders with Armenia in 1993 in solidarity with Azerbaijan as Armenian armed forces have occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan since 1992, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Turkey and Armenia took a significant step last year when they signed protocols in Zurich to improve relations, but failed to implement the protocols due to allegations from both sides that they did not respect what the protocols called for.

Meanwhile, Yerevan Press Club head Boris Navasardyan, who participated in the same panel discussion, told Today’s Zaman that concentrating on Turkish-Armenian relations has prevented a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. “We passed the best time for negotiating peace in the period of 2005-2007. Unfortunately, we missed a rapprochement with Turkey,” he said.

He also said the United States has focused too much on Turkish-Armenian relations and while doing this missed important developments on the Armenian-Azerbaijani front. **Yonca Poyraz Doğan** İstanbul