



September 28, 2023

The Honorable Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Anthony Blinken
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Request for Action to Stop Azerbaijan's Attacks on Armenia

Dear President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken:

We are an informal group of organizations and individuals who advocate for international religious freedom on a multi-faith, bipartisan basis. We write to ask you to take immediate action to stop Azerbaijan's evolving genocide¹ against the world's oldest Christian nation: Armenia. This began with its siege and invasion of the Nagorno-Karabakh territory and threatens the internationally recognized Republic of Armenia as well.

Specifically, we ask that you revoke the Administration's 2022 waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act until the following conditions are met:

1. All Armenians are allowed to leave Nagorno-Karabakh if they wish to do so voluntarily under humane conditions.
2. Armenians who chose to remain in Nagorno-Karabakh (or return) are guaranteed that they will possess full legal, political, and human rights, including religious freedom, without discrimination, and be able to live in peace with full access to food, medical supplies, electricity, water, internet, and other necessary conditions of life.
3. Those who leave permanently are given full compensation for their lost property and possessions.
4. There is a full international investigation and accountability for reported war crimes.
5. Azerbaijan agrees to and does comply with past (and any future) orders of the International Court of Justice.
6. Azerbaijan and Turkey commit to not invade or threaten the existence of the Armenian nation, including efforts to create a land corridor that would connect the two nations by bifurcating Armenian territory.

On September 19-20, 2023, Azerbaijan launched an unprovoked war on Nagorno-Karabakh, an autonomous enclave with 120,000 residents populated by Armenians for millennia. Contrary to its characterization as a "breakaway" region, it was intended to be autonomous when it was taken from Armenia by Joseph Stalin and placed inside the newly created Azerbaijan Republic in 1918 just as he created Nakhchivan as an Azeri autonomous region inside Armenia. The invasion followed a nine-month siege--blocking food and medical shipments, disrupting water, electricity, and internet connections. Azerbaijan threatened to shoot down humanitarian flights and flouted orders of the International Court of Justice (February 2, and July 6, 2023) to stop the blockade. It

increased rather than stopping (as the ICJ ordered) its promotion and incitement of racial and religious hatred and discrimination against Armenians.²

Armenians fear that they have no future in Nagorno-Karabakh under Azeri control. They are leaving as rapidly as clogged roads and Azeri checkpoints permit.³ International monitors are not yet permitted to enter Nagorno-Karabakh to protect against widely reported atrocities, despite a recent agreement to allow them after pleas from your Administration.⁴ Over 50,000 refugees have already entered Armenia. At this rate, there will be no Armenians left in Nagorno Karabakh in a few days.⁵

This Administration was shamefully silent or even complicit prior to this invasion.⁶ Yuri Kim, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs, met with an Azerbaijan official shortly before it started and signaled the US position by proclaiming his nation an important, “valuable partner” and U.S. ally.⁷ Azerbaijan clearly believed that this was a signal that they could invade with impunity, just as they had blockaded Nagorno-Karabakh for 10 months without impositions of sanctions or other consequences. Calls for peace and all parties to return to negotiations rang hollow on the day following the military invasion.⁸ And perhaps most astounding was the President’s decision to receive Azerbaijan’s Foreign Minister in New York for a smiling photo op with the First Lady on the day after the invasion.⁹

This Administration was commendably the first to recognize the 1915 Ottoman Empire Armenian Genocide in 2021, something Turkey has never admitted. It did so soon after Azerbaijan’s 2020 invasion and occupation of significant Nagorno-Karabakh territory displaced over 90,000 indigenous Christian Armenians with many documented war crimes. It has been clear since then, from Azeri and Turkish statements and propaganda, that a second invasion was planned encompassing all of Armenia—to finish the job started by the Ottoman Turks. In the days before the invasion, there were ample warnings of Azeri troop movements encircling Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev and Turkey’s President Tayyip Erdogan repeatedly threatened to remove Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh and indeed to remove Armenia itself from the map because it inconveniently separates the two nations.¹⁰ President Aliyev said on December 24, 2022 after initiating the blockade: *“No-one can influence us. There may be calls, there may be some statements, but we don't need to pay attention to them. We answer these calls simply out of political courtesy, but this will not change our position in the slightest.”*¹¹

Warnings about an impending invasion were communicated to the Administration with increasingly desperate requests for strong intervention over the last ten months. Genocide Watch, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, and Luis Moreno Ocampo, founding International Criminal Court Prosecutor, all reported on Azerbaijan’s clear intentions,¹² along with many other informed observers, military and legal experts, this Roundtable, and the American Armenian diaspora. Our Roundtable wrote asking for actions similar to those proposed here in February 2023.

On the day following the invasion, President Erdogan said, in a speech to the UN General Assembly, that Turkey and Azerbaijan act as “one nation, two states” and that Turkey fully

supports the invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh.¹³ Later that day, he announced it was time occupy all of Armenia--regularly referred to as “Western Azerbaijan” in Azeri and Turkish state-controlled media.¹⁴ He said flatly: “Armenia is our land. We need to jointly develop the concept of returning to Western Azerbaijan.”

Government propaganda in both countries have ignited hatred of Armenians to a fever pitch. Calls for beheading, mutilating, and raping of Armenian men, women, and children with payment of bounties are widespread on Azeri social media.¹⁵ There is a clear religious aspect to this campaign in which dominance of Islam and Turkic ethnicities over Christianity and non-Turkic ethnicities is articulated. History has been re-written to suggest that Armenians 6,000 year history as an indigenous presence in the region never happened. A policy of demolishing Armenian churches and other cultural relics in occupied Nagorno-Karabakh since 2020 and in other parts of Azerbaijan is a means of erasing the history and faith of this people group.

Azerbaijan has refused to guarantee the security of Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁶ Instead, it says it plans “integration” of Armenians into Azerbaijan. Sadly, it is clear that this currently means a continuation of what happened in areas conquered by Azerbaijan in 2000. They are now devoid of Armenians, and all ancient churches and cultural/historical sites have been utterly destroyed. There is nothing in public statements by Azeri leaders or recent history to suggest that they have any intention of dealing fairly or even humanely with the Armenian citizens of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act provides that “United States assistance under this or any other Act (other than assistance under title V of this Act) may not be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.” Such a certification is impossible in the current context.

Your administration’s waiver of Section 907 on June 21, 2022 said it “will not undermine or hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan or be used for offensive purposes against Armenia.”¹⁷ Recent events show that efforts to negotiate peace have failed. The GAO reported in 2020 that the US had given almost \$1 billion to Azerbaijan, including military assistance, under waiver authority since 2002.¹⁸ Continuing this assistance is unconscionable in light of Azerbaijan’s aggression.

Whether or not Azerbaijan has assisted in the US fight against international terrorism or is a needed source of gas and oil amidst Russia’s war on Ukraine, it is conducting terrorism of its own and threatens to do more. Your Administration looked the other way as Azerbaijan swallowed up Nagorno Karabakh. Will it intervene or look away again as it unites with Turkey to fully occupy the internationally recognized Republic of Armenia? Ignoring a genocide and failing to exercise the duty to protect vulnerable populations constitutes complicity under international law.¹⁹

If the US abandons its past track record of standing firm on human rights and religious freedom violations, there will be no nation strong enough to stop the lawless nations that increasingly

believe that might and money gives them the right to trample the rights of minority communities and smaller nations. We are at the point of no return with threats to religious minorities emerging all around the world.

In closing, we would note that three bills have been introduced in Congress that will eliminate the President's right to waive Section 907 and put strong requirements on the Administration to address the issues raised here, impose sanctions, and more.²⁰ We sincerely hope that the Administration will initiate the needed actions on its own.

Respectfully,

ORGANIZATIONS

Advocates for Faith & Justice

Advocates for Faith & Justice in Vietnam

American Friends of Kurdistan

American Sikh Council

Americans for Artsakh

Ani Fine Jewelry

Armenian Assembly of America

Armenian Bar Association

Armenian National Committee of America

Baptist World Alliance

Bellwether International

Bitter Winter: A Magazine on Religious Liberty and Human Rights

BPSOS

Christian Freedom International

Christians In Need Foundation

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding & Policy

Church of Scientology International

Church of Scientology, National Public Affairs Office

Coptic Solidarity

East Coast Christian TV Broadcasting
Free Yezidi Foundation
Genocide Watch
Global Peace Foundation
In Defense of Christians
Indigenous Ministries International
International Christian Concern
International Committee on Nigeria
Iraqi Christian Relief Council
Jubilee Campaign
Katartismos Global
Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice
Law and Liberty Trust
Nettie's
No Business With Genocide
Oliva International, LLC
Orthodox Public Affairs Committee
Parity
Patmos Institute
Prayer Pioneers
Saint Nicholas Freedom Group
Save the Persecuted Christians
Shai Fund
The Armenian Bar Association
The Children's Heritage Foundation
The International Multi-Faith Coalition

The Washington Times Foundation

The Zovighian Partnership Public Office

United Sikhs

Widows and Orphans

World Sikh Parliament

INDIVIDUALS

Ani Khachian - Founder & Principal Designer, Ani Fine Jewelry

Armen Kanayan - Americans for Artsakh

Bared Maronian

Bishop Dr. Guillermo Ahumada - President, The International Multi-Faith Coalition

Carly Amon

Caroline Cox - The Baroness Cox of Queensbury, House of Lords

Charmaine Hedding - President, Shai Fund

Dasko Shirwani - Advisor, KRG

Dede Laugesen - Executive Director, Save the Persecuted Christians

Dee A. Cook - CEO, Indigenous Ministries International

Dr. Christine M. Sequenzia - Founder & Executive Director, Oliva International, LLC

Dr. Gregory Stanton - Founding President, Genocide Watch

Dr. Paul Murray - International Vice President, Global Peace Foundation

Dr. William Terrence Devlin - Volunteer CEO, Widows and Orphans

Faith J. H. McDonnell - Directory of Advocacy, Katartismos Global

Father John Anderson - President, Saint Nicholas Freedom Group

George Gigicos - Chairman, Orthodox Public Affairs Committee

Heba Abdallah Hanna - Lawyer

Hon. Rollin A. Van Broekhoven - Board Member & Professor, IGE & Oxford House Research

Jacqueline Karaaslanian - Co-Founder & CEO of LLA.LLC

Karmella Borashan – Board Member, Assyrian Aid Society of America

Karzan Muhammed - U.S. Military Linguist & Cultural Advisor

Katrina Lantos Sweet - President, Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice

Kaylee Fisher - Global Operations Director, IRF Secretariat

Kelsey McIvor - Student, University of California, Berkeley

Kyle Abts - Executive Director, International Committee on Nigeria

Kyle Wisdom - Deputy Director, International Institute for Religious Freedom

Lauren Homer - President, Law and Liberty Trust

Lisa Johnson - CEO, East Coast Christian TV Broadcasting

Luis A. Gonzalez - Programs Director, Church of Scientology International

Lynn Zovighian - Co-Founder & Managing Director, The Zovighian Partnership Public Office

Marco Respinti - Director-in-Charge, Bitter Winter: A Magazine on Religious Liberty and Human Rights

Michael Krikorian - Owner of Blue Bay Enterprises

Nadine Maenza - President, IRF Secretariat

Nasim Ahmed Malik - General Secretary, International Human Rights Committee

Patrice J. Pederson - President, First Freedom Foundation

Patricia Streeter - Co-Leader, Anglian Persecuted Church Network

Pete Rathbun - Former President, Christian Legal Society

Peter John Kovach - Retired Diplomat

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon - Executive Director, Churches for Middle East Peace

Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen - Executive Director, Parity

Rev. Dr. Nathan Hosler - Director, Office of Peacebuilding & Policy, Church of the Brethren

Rev. Mario Felix Leonart Barroso - General Coordinator, Patmor Institute

Ryan Lee Hathaway

Sam Brownback - Former U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom

Scott Morgan - President, Red Eagle Enterprises

Scott Stearman - UN Representative, Baptist World Alliance

Senge Sering - President, Gilgit Baltistan Studies

Shaimaa Mohamed Moustafa Elmanzalawi - Liverpool Jones Morees University, U.K.

Sharyn Runyon - IRF Secretariat

Siobhan Nash-Marshall - Founder, Christians In Need Foundation; Professor, Mary T. Clark Chair of Philosophy, Manhattanville College

Susan Taylor - National Public Affairs Director, Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

Tania Calabrese - Owner, Nettie's

Travis Wade Zinn - Path of Trinity

¹ The Genocide Convention says that an act of genocide is "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." (Genocide Convention, Article II (c)). It does not require immediate mass killing. Starvation, deprivation of medicine, heat, water, and other necessities of life are sufficient. This is what happened over the last 10 months, and many Armenians died, along with miscarried babies. <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml> Ethnic cleansing can also be considered a type of genocide as well as a war crime and a crime against humanity. <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/ethnic-cleansing.shtml>. Armenians are also entitled to protection as a racial and religious group under numerous other international conventions and treaties.

² ICC orders against Azerbaijan on petition of Armenia ordering compliance with the *International Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*:

2023 7-6 <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/180/180-20230706-ord-01-00-en.pdf>; 2023 4-25

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/180/180-20230425-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>; 2023 2-22

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/180/180-20230222-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>; 2021 12-7

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/180/180-20211207-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>

³ <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-azerbaijan-karabakh-erdogan-aliyev/32607769.html> At least 200 gravely injured or killed in an explosion at a fuel station amidst panicked civilians trying to escape from Azeri occupied areas.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/09/25/nagorno-karabakh-armenia-azerbaijan-russia/>

⁴ <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/focus/20230921-documenting-suspected-war-crimes-from-nagorno-karabakh-conflict>

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/tens-thousands-ethnic-armenians-rush-flee-nagorno-karabakh-2023-09-27/>

⁶ <https://time.com/6316001/us-failures-nagorno-karabakh/>

⁷ <https://armenianweekly.com/2023/09/17/biden-administration-dodges-senate-demands-for-u-s-action-to-break-azerbajjans-genocidal-blockade-of-artsakh/>, reporting on Senate Foreign Relations Hearing on September 17, 2023.

⁸ <https://news.am/eng/news/781925.html>; <https://am.usembassy.gov/statement-by-secretary-2/>

⁹ <https://www.azerbaycan24.com/en/azerbajjani-fm-meets-president-biden-photo/>

¹⁰ For example, a map displayed by the Turkish Minister of Defense in 2019 showed Turkey and Azerbaijan sharing a common border. There is no trace of Armenia, Georgia, and Russian territory in the caucuses.

<https://gagrule.net/turkish-defence-minister-posts-map-of-turkey-that-includes-pieces-of-syria-iraq-bulgaria-greece-and-all-of-cyprus/?fbclid=IwAR2xLCCGuQxyw6mLzavvEwqdtYOJqDd9wLS2NlixddDrw2d6sSGLt1hnB0k>

¹¹ <https://en.azvision.az/news/164663/-second-karabakh-war-and-the-two-years-after-the-war-have-shown-that-no-one-can-influence-us-%C2%A0.html>

¹² Luis Moreno Campo, the first ICC prosecutor, issued a report on August 7, 2023 *Expert Opinion: Genocide Against Armenians in 2023*; https://luismorenoocampo.com/lmo_en/report-armenia/ . The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention issued a Red Flag Alert for Genocide-Azerbaijan-Update #8 on June 12, 2023, <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/red-flag-alerts/red-flag-alert-for-genocide---azerbaijan---update-%238>; a 128 page report *Risk Factors and Indicators of the Crime of Genocide in the Republic of Artsakh: Applying the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes to the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict* on September 5, 2023, https://www.lemkininstitute.com/files/ugd/9bc553_2e3babd9d7834d7bcfa262f88c9fa74.pdf; and a final SOS for the Armenians of #Artsakh on September 19, 2023, <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/sos-alerts-1/sos---artsakh>. Genocide Watch issued a genocide warning on Nagorno-Karabakh back in 2021 saying it had reached the stage of extinction! <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/genocide-emergency-alert-on-the-war-in-artsakh-nagorno-karabakh> Among many other hearings and presentations, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a hearing on September 6, 2023, featuring remarks by Co-Chairs Congressmen Chris Smith and James McGovern, Mr. Campo, and David Phillips, who all noted the imminent threat to the enclave.

<https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/events/hearings/nagorno-karabakh-update>. And the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on September 14, 2023 at which AAS Yuri Kim testified and heard strong member demands for immediate Administration action given the imminent threat to Nagorno-Karabakh. <https://armenianweekly.com/2023/09/17/biden-administration-dodges-senate-demands-for-u-s-action-to-break-azerbaijans-genocidal-blockade-of-artsakh/>

¹³ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/09/turkeys-erdogan-backs-azerbaijans-offensive-nagorno-karabakh-us-russia-urge>

¹⁴ <https://x.com/agbu/status/1704154582564376927?s=20>

¹⁵ The calls and videos over the last few weeks have disappeared from X but are still on Telegram and similar channels. <https://x.com/hovhaDovah/status/1705231216591458684?s=20>

¹⁶ *Baku Borrows From Assad's Blueprint*, 9/25/2023; https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/90625?utm_source=rssemail&utm_medium=email&mkt_tok=ODEzLVhZVS00MjIAAAG0a-YRZem-ISsW6KOJxjnFn8D8A--8sxt-v_YmWUcCuNkJYqwLS65rng9King6xc2kMo-0KAtR70mmnX_DmiEj7O-goloLe8YB_-U9_DB

¹⁷ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/07/05/2022-14190/extension-of-waiver-of-section-907-of-the-freedom-support-act-with-respect-to-assistance-to-the>

¹⁸ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104619.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/09/22/nagorno-karabakh-genocide-armenia/>

²⁰ Introduced by Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) H.R.5686 - To prevent ethnic cleansing and atrocities against ethnic Armenians, promote accountability for the same, protect and provide humanitarian assistance to Armenians in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh impacted by actions taken by the Government of Azerbaijan, and for other purposes. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5686?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22Azerbaijan%22%7D&s=1&r=1>; <https://chrissmith.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=411679>

Introduced by Frank Pallone, D-NJ and four other members of Congress:

H.R.5683 - To protect and provide humanitarian assistance to Armenians in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh impacted by actions taken by the Government of Azerbaijan, and for other purposes. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5683?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22Azerbaijan%22%7D&s=1&r=2>

Introduced by Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ):

S.2900 - A bill to protect and provide humanitarian assistance to Armenians in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh impacted by actions taken by the Government of Azerbaijan, and for other purposes. Text here:

https://anca.org/assets/pdf/092123_Menendez_AzerbaijanSanctionsBill.pdf ;

<https://armenianweekly.com/2023/09/21/menendez-bill-seeks-ban-on-u-s-military-aid-to-azerbaijan/>