

United States Senate

December 9, 2015

Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to offer my congratulations to all of those attending the Capitol Hill Celebration of Nagorno Karabakh's Commitment to Peace. I offer a warm welcome to the Armenian Americans present at this special event as well as our Armenian friends visiting from the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. What better meeting place to celebrate Nagorno Karabakh's commitment to freedom and democracy than the United States' Capitol, which, like Stepanakert, stands as a symbol of independence and self-determination.

Yet, as you know all too well, the people of Nagorno Karabakh do not currently enjoy the same feeling of peace and security in their capitol, as we do here in the United States. The Karabakhi Armenians are faced with a daily struggle to protect themselves from the dangerous aggression of their neighbor, Azerbaijan.

Last month, just a short walk from where this gathering is taking place, over eighty of my colleagues in the House of Representatives signed the Royce-Engel Letter, which calls on the Organization for Security and Cooperation's Minsk Group—tasked with reaching a resolution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict—to take specific measures to ensure that the ceasefire agreement is respected.

These include: an agreement from all sides not to deploy snipers along the Nagorno Karabakh line of contact; the placement of OSCE-monitored, advanced gunfire-locator systems and sound-ranging equipment to determine the source of attacks along the line of contact; and the deployment of additional OSCE observers along the line of contact to better monitor cease-fire violations. Both Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh have expressed support for these pro-peace initiatives. Azerbaijan has not. I applaud the representatives of the various Armenian organizations taking part in this evening's celebration for their dedication to a peaceful resolution to the conflict, despite Azerbaijan's intransigence.

I am proud to represent Illinois' Armenian-American community in the U.S. Senate. I am also proud to reiterate my continued commitment to support freedom, democracy, and peace in Nagorno Karabakh.

Sincerely,



Mark Steven Kirk
United States Senate

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