

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 9, 2019

The Honorable Mark Green  
Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Green:

We are writing to express opposition to USAID's decision to cease funding humanitarian landmine clearance within the traditional boundaries of Nagorno-Karabakh at the end of 2019, as per your agency's July 30th letter to Congressman Brad Sherman. The end of USAID's funding threatens the lives and health of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh as well as prospects for peace in the region. We urge USAID to reconsider this decision.


Senators from both parties have long recognized the importance of assistance to the victims of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The FY 2018 Foreign Operations Appropriations Committee report stated that "The Committee recommends assistance for victims of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in amounts consistent with prior fiscal years, and for ongoing needs related to the conflict." The FY 2016 and FY 2017 reports specifically emphasized the importance of demining activity: "The Committee recognizes that Nagorno-Karabakh has a per capita landmine accident rate among the highest in the world, and that mine clearance programs have been effective where implemented. The Committee is concerned with territorial restrictions placed on demining activities in the region and recommends continued funding for, and the geographic expansion of, such programs." Given the unknown amount of landmines and unexploded ordnance jeopardizing lives in Nagorno-Karabakh, continuing to fund humanitarian landmine clearance programs is critical.

We are especially dismayed that your agency's decision contradicts your testimony during a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on April 9th, when you responded affirmatively when asked whether USAID is "committed to completing the clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnances within the traditional boundaries of [Nagorno-Karabakh]." We understand there had been an expectation that demining Nagorno-Karabakh would be complete in 2019 or 2020, but new information indicates that this timeline is unrealistic. We nonetheless expect USAID to follow through on the commitment made to Congress to complete the clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnance.

The presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance in Nagorno-Karabakh creates uncertainty and fear that endangers not only people's lives, but also prospects for peace in a volatile region. We agree with USAID that a peaceful resolution to the conflict is critical to improving the long-term futures of residents of Nagorno-Karabakh and internally displaced persons. Insecurity caused by landmines seriously undercuts the chance of such a peaceful resolution, so USAID's demining work provides invaluable support to the people and the peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh.

As your agency's aforementioned letter states, USAID-funded mine clearance in Nagorno-Karabakh has "made the region undoubtedly safer." However, clearance work remains to be done and the people of Nagorno-Karabakh cannot afford to have that work ended or disrupted by a lack of funds. We strongly urge USAID to reconsider its decision to end funding for humanitarian landmine clearance in Nagorno-Karabakh at the end of the year.

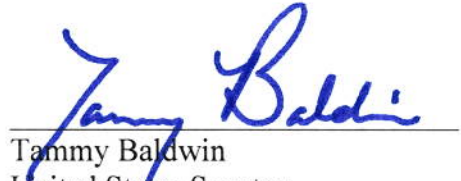
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



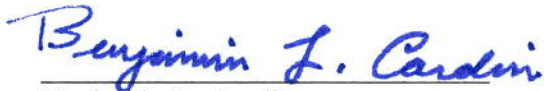
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



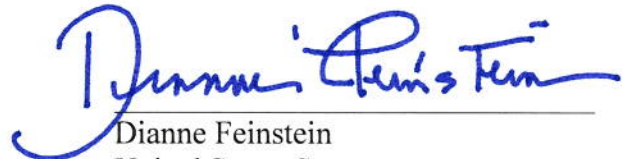
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
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United States Senator

*Elizabeth Warren*

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

*Edward J. Markey*

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

*Christopher S. Murphy*

Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

*Bernard Sanders*

Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

*Chris Van Hollen*

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

*Ron Wyden*

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator