



Armenian National Committee of America

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U.S.-Artsakh Travel and Communication Resolution (H.Res.697)

Issue:

Self-imposed travel and communication restrictions handicap U.S. diplomacy toward a peaceful resolution of the Artsakh-Azerbaijan conflict, a longstanding U.S. foreign policy priority.

Facts:

During the early years of the Artsakh conflict, the Aliyev family (which has ruled Azerbaijan nearly continuously for the past half century) succeeded in restricting the freedom of American diplomats and other officials from traveling to Artsakh or communicating directly with its government leaders and civil society stakeholders.

-- The Azerbaijani government (Rated "Not Free" by Freedom House) seeks to isolate Artsakh, block dialogue, and leverage its escalating violence to force the free people of Artsakh under its control. Artsakh and Armenia seek a stronger cease-fire, the removal of barriers to dialogue, and the resolution of status and security issues through peaceful means.

***Peace requires diplomacy
and discussion, not
isolation and intolerance.
We need more dialogue,
not less.***

-- U.S. policymakers are currently working via the OSCE Minsk Group to negotiate a peaceful resolution that will advance U.S. regional interests. But, due to outdated and obsolete restrictions, only a handful of U.S. officials connected to the OSCE Minsk Group are allowed to travel to Artsakh or directly engage with its officials.

Analysis:

America's global leadership has historically been driven by forward-leaning diplomacy that encourages open dialogue, debate, and discourse toward peaceful solutions.

-- Peace requires diplomacy and discussion, not isolation and intolerance. We need more dialogue, not less.

-- Self-imposed restrictions, gag-rules, travel bans, and diplomatic no-go zones are self-defeating, unnecessarily handicapping U.S. foreign policy practitioners.

-- U.S. leadership in finding a peaceful Artsakh resolution requires unrestricted travel to the entire region (Yerevan, Baku, and Stepanakert) and a robust dialogue with all key stakeholders.

-- As diplomats know, there is no substitute for direct dialogue or an on-the-ground presence.

-- Bans on dialogue divide people. They are part of the problem, not the solution.

-- The removal of restrictions would facilitate improved U.S. oversight of our aid program in Artsakh, including the work by The HALO Trust to de-mine farmlands and villages.

Proposal:

The House of Representatives should adopt the U.S.-Artsakh Travel and Communication Resolution (H.Res.697), affirming America's commitment to unrestricted travel and open dialogue between the United States and Artsakh at all levels of government and civil society.

-- Reject Baku's veto over direct U.S. dialogue with Artsakh.

-- Let our diplomats be diplomats. Allow them to do their job. To foster understanding. To promote dialogue. To seek peace.
