



Please deliver
to: Foreign
Affairs LA

Armenian National Committee of America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

To: Foreign Affairs LA
From: Kate Nahapetian, Government Affairs Director
Date: August 3, 2005

Re: Freedom for Nagorno Karabakh

I wanted to bring to your attention an important pro-democracy initiative by the Armenian Caucus in support of Nagorno Karabakh's right to freedom and self-determination.

The Co-Chairs of the Caucus, Reps. Frank Pallone and Joe Knollenberg, are currently circulating a Dear Colleague collecting signatures on a letter praising America's vital role in supporting democracy, meeting humanitarian needs, and facilitating the search for a lasting peace in Nagorno Karabakh. The letter urges the President to deepen our engagement with the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh and to expand existing assistance programs to meet pressing developmental needs.

As you know, the people of Nagorno Karabakh - in the face of war and aggression - have stood up for the values that we hold so dearly as Americans, including the right to live under a government of their own choosing. Just this past June, Nagorno Karabakh conducted its fourth democratic parliamentary election since 1991, which were monitored by approximately one hundred observers from the U.S. and around the world. The Public International Law and Policy Group delegation, which included American academics and former State Department officials, recently reported favorably on the elections, calling them free and transparent. This Congressional letter (see attached) expresses our nation's support for this young democracy and gives voice to our belief that all people deserve to live in freedom.

To join this effort, please contact Tim Del Monico in Rep. Pallone's office at 5-4671 or via email at tim.delmonico@mail.house.gov. As always, feel free to contact the ANCA for more information at (202) 775-1918 or anca@anca.org.

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Text of Congressional Letter to President Bush

Dear Mr. President:

We write to draw your attention to the important progress being made by the people of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh, towards freedom, peace and prosperity. The United States has played a critical role in Nagorno Karabakh's progress, offering crucial moral support for the Nagorno Karabakh democracy movement, providing desperately needed humanitarian assistance, and working for peace within the OSCE Minsk Group. As we champion freedom for all peoples around the world, we should also continue supporting the aspirations of people of Artsakh to live in freedom, particularly in the strategically important South Caucasus.

The path to freedom has not been easy for the people of Nagorno Karabakh. Following a peaceful demand by Karabakh's legislative body to reunite the region with Armenia in 1988, Azerbaijan launched an ethnic cleansing campaign against individuals of Armenian descent. As a result, thousands of ethnic Armenians were killed, while some 400,000 fled Azerbaijan to escape killings. On September 2, 1991, the people of Nagorno Karabakh, consistent with the laws in force at the time, declared their independence. The Declaration of Independence noted Azerbaijan's policies of discrimination against the Armenian people, the resultant need to restore friendly relations between Armenian and Azerbaijani people and respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In response, Azerbaijan launched an all-out war against the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, which killed thousands, destroyed Nagorno Karabakh's economy and forced some 450,000 Azeris to flee from territories around Nagorno Karabakh. The consequences of a devastating war and an ongoing Azerbaijani blockade have all failed to break Nagorno Karabakh people's determination to live in freedom.

Since their independence, the people of Nagorno Karabakh have steadily progressed on the path of democracy and conducted regular elections, which were praised by international observers as free, fair and transparent. While strengthening its democratic institutions, Nagorno Karabakh has also successfully transitioned from a Soviet-inherited centrally-planned economy to a market economy. Despite significant setbacks, Nagorno Karabakh has largely restored its infrastructure and introduced reforms to encourage private enterprise and foreign investments.

The United States is proud to support a nation whose citizens are eager to enjoy democratic rights and freedoms, develop their economy, and create a better future. The U.S. direct humanitarian assistance to Nagorno Karabakh has contributed significantly to rebuilding Karabakh's war-torn economy. Yet, more needs to be done. Humanitarian assistance to Nagorno Karabakh should be continued and also expanded to include a development component to meet the challenges of Karabakh's fledgling market economy.

With its democratically elected government, capable armed forces and an independent foreign policy, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic clearly satisfies the international criteria for statehood. Throughout its 14-year history of independence, Nagorno Karabakh has proven to be a reliable partner of the international community. Nagorno Karabakh has contributed meaningfully to peace and stability in the strategic South Caucasus, a goal the United States shares.

A de facto independent state, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic is a country of proud citizens committed to the values of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights. We, as Americans, cherish and defend these same values at home and internationally. We stood with Nagorno Karabakh when its people challenged the legacy of the Soviet totalitarianism, contributing to the democratization of the former Soviet Union and to the end of the Cold War. This policy should continue through expanded dialogue with the democratically elected leadership of Nagorno Karabakh and an increased U.S. humanitarian and development assistance. And above all, the United States should unequivocally support the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh's to decide their own future.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,