

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2013

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Room HT-2, The Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey:

We are writing to share with you our strong support for U.S. assistance to Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh, and the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia, for minority communities at risk in the Middle East, and other related foreign assistance provisions to promote peace and stability in the Caucasus region.

As you work with your colleagues in preparing the Fiscal Year 2014 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we respectfully call upon you to consider the following requests:

Assistance to Nagorno Karabakh:

It is more important than ever that the United States continue demonstrating principled leadership in supporting a peaceful, negotiated, and democratic resolution of security and status issues related to the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. A key element of this support, for the past 15 years, has been our direct assistance to Nagorno Karabakh, which to this day, stands as an example of how democracy can be born from conflict and progress into a popularly supported government.

We want to thank the Subcommittee for stipulating in its FY13 bill that “at least \$5,000,000 for humanitarian and development programs in Nagorno-Karabakh” be allocated. We were encouraged by this clear directive to USAID and urge the Subcommittee to do the same again this year.

We request that the Subcommittee include language directing USAID to spend at least \$5 million in Fiscal Year 2014 for humanitarian and development programs in Nagorno Karabakh.

Assistance to the Javakhk Region in Georgia:

We encourage the Subcommittee, as part of a robust U.S. aid package to Georgia, to expand on U.S. assistance previously targeted to the largely Armenian-populated region of Samtskhe-Javakheti (Javakhk) in south-central Georgia, including funding for job-creation programs and ongoing improvements to transportation and communication infrastructure.

Former Georgian Ambassador to the U.S., Temuri Yakobashvili, has welcomed the targeting of U.S. aid to Javakhk, stating that: "The Embassy of Georgia, in support of our government's material commitment to economic development for our citizens in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region and throughout all of our Republic, looks forward to working with our friends in the U.S. Congress and the Administration and with all American civil society stakeholders – including, of course, with the Armenian American community – in encouraging the targeting of U.S. assistance to meet Javakheti's urgent job-creation, infrastructure, technical, and humanitarian needs."

Over the past decade, USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) have expanded their presence in Javakheti, a historically Armenian populated region in the Republic of Georgia, in an effort to address core humanitarian and economic difficulties that face the population. Over the past year, Armenian Americans have worked with USAID to identify ways to leverage existing U.S. aid programs and explore public-private partnerships.

We request that the Subcommittee include language directing USAID to target at least 10 percent of Fiscal Year 2014 aid to Georgia to fund sustainable job-creation programs in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Assistance to Armenia:

Armenia, a crucial ally in a strategic region of the world, has extended its full support for U.S.-led peace-keeping deployments in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo. Last year, Armenia tripled its deployment of troops to the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, at a time other allies were pulling out.

Additionally, following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, Armenia immediately implemented a series of measures to cooperate with the United States, including granting blanket clearance for U.S. flights over Armenian territory, as well as refueling and landing rights for U.S. aircraft. In addition, Armenia consistently ranks high on the *Wall Street Journal* and the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom. This year, Armenia was ranked the 38th freest economy in the world, ahead of Belgium and France.

At the same time, the people of Armenia continue to face the devastating impact of Turkey's and Azerbaijan's dual blockades, which according to past World Bank estimates, cost Armenia close to \$1 billion annually. Our assistance programs have played a vital role in helping alleviate the crushing blockades and promoting the development of Armenia's free market system and democratic institutions.

Recognizing the tight fiscal constraints facing the Subcommittee, we respectfully request that you include language within the Assistance for Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia Account ensuring that not less than \$50 million in overall economic aid (including Economic Support Fund, International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement, and Global Health Programs), is appropriated for Armenia in Fiscal Year 2014.

Assistance to Christian and other minority communities in the Middle East:

Events in the Middle East, from the Arab spring and unrest in Syria to developments in Iraq and elsewhere, have highlighted the challenges faced by Armenian and other Christian populations as well as other minority communities within areas of conflict, turmoil, and transition. The Armenian and Christian communities in Syria are enduring increasing hardship and are especially vulnerable. Community sources on the ground in Syria report, and U.S. based Armenian humanitarian assistance coalitions have confirmed, that the humanitarian aid generously provided by the U.S. to date has not, to any meaningful degree, reached the Armenian populations in Aleppo and other regions. Thousands of Syrian Armenians have sought safe-haven in Armenia, which continues, without any U.S aid, to assist with housing, education and employment programs.

We request that the Subcommittee allocate funds for humanitarian and resettlement assistance specifically targeted to Armenian and other Christian populations as well as other minority communities.

We request that the Subcommittee urge USAID to ensure that all vulnerable populations in Syria – including Armenians and other Christians – benefit from the life-saving humanitarian assistance and also request that the State Department/USAID work with Armenia to aid the growing number of Syrian nationals who have sought refuge there.

Enhancing Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act:

Enacted in 1992, Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act stands as a statement of U.S. opposition to Azerbaijan's blockades and other aggressive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. Since its enactment, Azerbaijan has not lifted its illegal blockades, has ignored House Appropriations Committee Report language opposing destabilizing threats, and has become increasingly belligerent. Congress should limit the President's waiver authority in the face of these provocations by Baku.

President Aliyev announced "our main enemies are Armenians of the world," during a February 28, 2012, national address. Azerbaijan also continues to oppose repeated calls by the three OSCE Minsk Group Co Chairs to remove its snipers from the border between Karabakh and Azerbaijan, although both Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh have agreed to this proposal.

As was widely reported in the international media, on August 31, 2012, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev personally pardoned convicted axe-murderer Ramil Safarov upon

his transfer to Azerbaijan from Hungary, despite agreeing to keep him incarcerated. Immediately after his pardon, Safarov received a promotion in the Azerbaijani military, an apartment, and years of back pay for his time spent in prison. The pardon was condemned around the world, including by President Obama, Members of Congress, the European Parliament, OSCE, Council of Europe, and NATO.

In light of Azerbaijan's actions, we urge you to add the following language narrowing the President's waiver authority and requiring the following additional certification that: *"In the last fiscal year, Azerbaijan has not taken hostile action, either through military force or incitement, including but not limited to threatening pronouncements by government officials, toward Armenia or Nagorno Karabakh, and has both stated and demonstrated its commitment to pursuing a lasting peace with Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh through solely non-violent means."*

Removing restrictions on contacts and communication with Nagorno Karabakh
Nagorno Karabakh has held five Parliamentary and five Presidential elections, which have been rated free and fair by international monitors. The United States, however, has limited communication with the democratically elected leaders of Karabakh, foreclosing for nearly 20 years many possibilities to promote U.S. interests in the region. The time has come for the lifting of outdated and counter-productive restrictions on the free exchange of ideas between U.S. officials and the democratically elected leadership of Karabakh.

As such, we respectfully request that this report language be included: *"In the interest of promoting mutual understanding, regional cooperation, and a fair and lasting peace, the Committee directs the Department of State to remove any official or unofficial restrictions on U.S.-Nagorno Karabakh travel, visitations, discussions, meetings, contacts, consultations, exchange programs, or other governmental or civil society communication, cooperation, or interaction."*

The Nagorno Karabakh Republic was one of the three parties to the 1994 cease-fire, which ended military hostilities between Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan. In its aftermath, Nagorno Karabakh participated in the OSCE Minsk Group peace process as an equal partner, along with Armenia and Azerbaijan. Since 1998, however, at Baku's insistence, Nagorno Karabakh has been excluded from the peace process. Nagorno Karabakh must be permitted to fully participate in all talks. To continue to exclude Karabakh from the negotiations, which are about the rights of Karabakh citizens, is counterproductive.

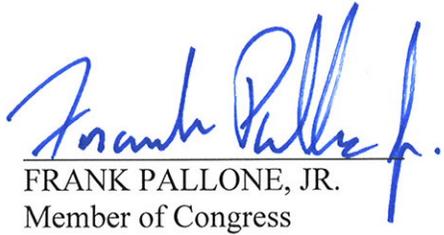
We respectfully request that the following report language be included: *"In the interest of promoting a lasting and durable peace in the South Caucasus, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic must be reinstated into the OSCE Minsk Group peace process as a full negotiating partner."*

Thank you for your leadership on the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs. We are grateful for your role in strengthening the

relationship between the U.S. and Armenia, supporting aid to Nagorno Karabakh, and on all the issues we have raised.

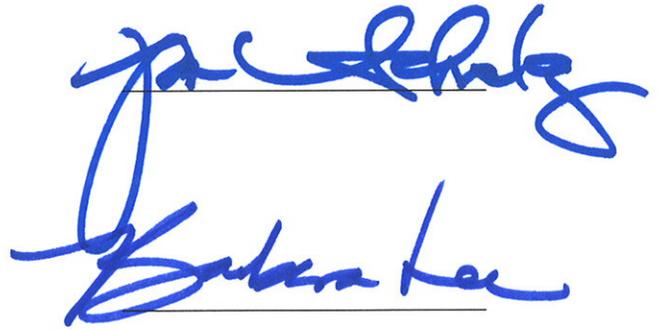
We appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress


MICHAEL GRIMM
Member of Congress



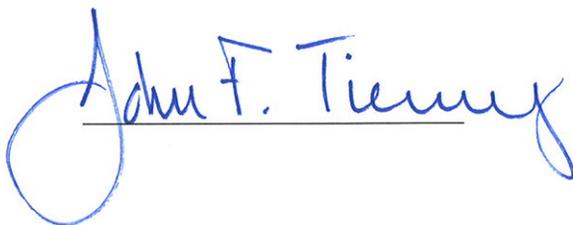


















Grace F. Napolitano

Gudy Chu

Lin Lu

Jim Lin

Jim Langevin

Anna Escobedo Cabral

Louella Sanchez

Ray Peters

Scott Rowley

Rush Holt

David N. Cicilline

Jack Spano

Henry A. Waxman

Member Signature Key

Page 1

1. Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr.
2. Congressman Michael G. Grimm
3. Congresswoman Linda T. Sanchez
4. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky
5. Congressman Chaka Fattah
6. Congresswoman Barbara Lee
7. Congressman Bruce Braley
8. Congressman Brad Sherman
9. Congressman John F. Tierney
10. Congressman Stephen F. Lynch
11. Congressman Edward J. Markey
12. Congressman Daniel Lipinski

Page 2

13. Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano
14. Congressman Gary C. Peters
15. Congresswoman Judy Chu
16. Congressman Joseph Crowley
17. Congressman Jim Costa
18. Congressman Rush Holt
19. Congressman James P. McGovern
20. Congressman David N. Cicilline
21. Congressman James R. Langevin
22. Congresswoman Jackie Speier
23. Congresswoman Anna G. Eshoo
24. Congressman Henry A. Waxman
25. Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez