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Armenian National Committee of America  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

March 15, 2022

The Honorable Joseph Biden  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations, write in opposition to continued U.S. taxpayer-funded Section 333 (Capacity Building), Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training, and other U.S. military or security assistance to the government of Azerbaijan, on the basis of Section 502B(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act and other provisions of U.S. law.

Any additional U.S. assistance – above and beyond the \$164,000,000 that has reportedly already been sent to the armed forces of Azerbaijan – risks materially strengthening Baku’s authoritarian capabilities and emboldening the unelected and unaccountable leaders of this authoritarian single-family regime. Azerbaijan, an oil-rich nation that already spends billions annually on its military, neither needs nor deserves U.S. tax dollars.

Continuing to send U.S. security or military aid to Azerbaijan – even assistance described as defensive or non-lethal - sends the dangerous signal to the Aliyev government that the United States is indifferent or, even worse, supportive of its violations of human rights. New military or security aid to Azerbaijan poses a serious risk of additional harm to civilians. Our nation must never be complicit in such state-sponsored violence. More broadly, this assistance undermines your Administration’s aim of centering human rights and democracy in our nation’s foreign policy.

Azerbaijan’s consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights is documented by our own State Department and leading human rights organizations, and reflected in growing Congressional concern over Baku’s violations of humanitarian and international law. Our U.S. Department of State’s most recent Human Rights Country Report on Azerbaijan documents “Significant human rights issues,” including: “unlawful or arbitrary killing; torture; arbitrary detention; harsh and sometimes life-threatening prison conditions; political prisoners” (<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/azerbaijan/>)

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Freedom House rates Azerbaijan as Not Free, noting that: “power in Azerbaijan’s authoritarian regime remains heavily concentrated in the hands of Ilham Aliyev, who has served as president since 2003, and his extended family.” (<https://freedomhouse.org/country/azerbaijan/freedom-world/2021>). Amnesty International has reported that: “war crimes were committed by Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. Several verified videos depicted the mistreatment of prisoners of war and other captives, decapitations, and desecration of the dead bodies of enemy soldiers.” (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/azerbaijan/report-azerbaijan/>). Human Rights Watch has reported that: “Azerbaijan’s government continues to wage a vicious crackdown on critics and dissenting voices.” (<https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/azerbaijan#>)

Credible reports of Azerbaijani human rights violations during fighting in Nagorno Karabakh in the fall of 2020 were addressed by the U.S. House of Representatives, which adopted the Cardenas-Schiff amendment to the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act. This measure called for Azerbaijan’s immediate and unconditional release of illegally held and abused Armenian prisoners of war, and requested a State Department investigation into Azerbaijani war crimes – including Azerbaijan’s deployment of foreign mercenaries and use of illegal cluster bomb and white phosphorous.

In light of these concerns, and given Azerbaijan’s consistent pattern of violating internationally recognized human rights, we call upon you to suspend U.S. security and military assistance to Azerbaijan.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We stand ready to engage with you and your senior staff on this matter.

Sincerely,

American Friends of Kurdistan  
Armenian National Committee of America  
Assyrian Policy Institute  
Christian Solidarity International  
Code Pink  
Coptic Solidarity  
Hellenic American Leadership Council  
Hindu American Foundation  
In Defense of Christians  
Israeli-American Civic Action Network  
Jewish World Watch  
National Council of Churches  
Women for Weapons Trade Transparency

cc: Members of Congress