



Armenian National Committee of America
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

March 21, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
568 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson:

On behalf of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), I am writing to convey the Armenian American community's profound disappointment with the Biden Administration's failure to hold Azerbaijan accountable for the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) in September, 2023.

The President's abandonment of Artsakh's Armenians will be front of mind for the million-strong Armenian American electoral constituency come November – with significant communities in key swing states including Nevada, Michigan and Pennsylvania poised to play an influential role in the federal elections. Armenian Americans have already voiced their dissatisfaction with the Biden Administration's appeasement of Azerbaijan's genocidal regime by voting "uncommitted" in key swing states – as reported in the New York Times, Washington Post, POLITICO, and USA Today.

Despite the repeated calls of Congressional leaders through bipartisan letters and resolutions urging immediate action be taken to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its aggression, the Biden Administration not only failed to constrain Azerbaijan – but repeatedly enabled and emboldened Baku's aggression, including:

- Reauthorizing military assistance to Azerbaijan despite a campaign promise to enforce Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, even in the wake of Azerbaijan's occupation of sovereign Armenian territory in 2021 and its blockade on Artsakh in 2023.
- Failing to declare Azerbaijan's 10-month siege of Artsakh a humanitarian crisis – legitimizing Baku's use of starvation as a tool of negotiation.
- Ruling out the use of sanctions to constrain Azerbaijan's aggression in a public statement by Special Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations Lou Bono – undermining U.S. leverage over Baku.
- Refusing to impose consequences on Azerbaijan following its military assault on Artsakh, despite having indicated during a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the U.S. would "not countenance any attempt at ethnic cleansing."
- Committing only \$15 million in humanitarian assistance to the 120,000 refugees forced from their homes by Azerbaijan – incommensurate with the dire needs of those displaced.

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- Resuming high-level engagement with Azerbaijan in the absence of accountability – despite a commitment by Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia James O’Brien that there would be “no business as usual” with Azerbaijan following its assault on Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Legitimizing a fundamentally asymmetric and unjust “peace process” between Armenia and Azerbaijan without demanding the immediate withdrawal of Azerbaijani forces from Armenian territory or an internationally guaranteed right of return for Artsakh’s Armenians.
- Authorizing the sale of F-16s and other defense articles to the Republic of Turkey, despite Turkey's track record of regional destabilization – from its occupation of Cyprus, attacks on Kurdish populations in Syria and Iraq, and its support for Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Artsakh and occupation of sovereign Armenian territory.

This Administration’s failure to impose meaningful costs on Azerbaijan for its genocide of Artsakh only incentivizes further aggression. With the Aliyev regime publicly rejecting Washington’s mediation efforts, and withdrawing from multilateral peace talks, it is clear Baku believes there is more to gain through war than through peace. And in light of Azerbaijan’s ongoing attacks on sovereign Armenian territory – and increasingly inflammatory territorial claims – there are genuine concerns of renewed war.

As such, I urge you and other Members of Congress to publicly pressure the Biden Administration to take tangible actions to deter an impending attack on Armenia by immediately suspending military assistance to Azerbaijan, and imposing Global Magnitsky Act sanctions on Azerbaijani officials complicit in war crimes and other gross human rights violations. We also call on Congressional leaders to move swiftly to ensure the repeal of the waiver authority of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act to ensure the permanent enforcement of restrictions on military assistance to Azerbaijan through the passage of H.R.7288. Finally, it is imperative that the Biden Administration work to forcefully advocate for the immediate release of all illegally detained Armenian prisoners of war and leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the right of return for the indigenous Armenians of Artsakh, including safeguarding their individual and collective property rights and the full protection of religious and cultural heritage sites.

Thank you in advance for conveying the Armenian American community’s concerns to the Biden Administration and for your continued advocacy in support of Armenia’s sovereignty and the fundamental rights of Artsakh’s Armenians.

Sincerely,



Raffi H. Hamparian
Chairman
Armenian National Committee of America

CC:

House Foreign Affairs Committee
House Armed Services Committee
House Appropriations Committee