

April XX, 2020

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

We write to express our support for continued funding for humanitarian projects in Nagorno-Karabakh. The United States has a long history of providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, including USAID's funding of humanitarian landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance. We ask you to include provisions supporting humanitarian demining and UXO clearance programs and other humanitarian assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh in the FY 2021 appropriations for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.

USAID-funded humanitarian demining work has cleared almost 500 minefields in Nagorno-Karabakh since 2000, saving untold civilian lives and building goodwill towards the United States. The Subcommittee has previously recognized the necessity of demining work, writing in the FY 2016 and FY 2017 reports that "The Committee recognizes that Nagorno-Karabakh has a per capita landmine accident rate among the highest in the world, and that mine clearance programs have been effective where implemented." However, mines continue to threaten civilians in the region. Mines have killed 12 people since 2017 and the past year alone has seen 12 near-miss scenarios.

We acknowledge that the Administration wants to focus on the peace process, and we share their desire to see progress on that front. However, we also understand that the Administration intends on ceasing its humanitarian clearance work at a time when landmines still threaten civilians. Anger and resentment from landmine accidents reduce the population's desire to see peace, so the threat of un-cleared landmines and UXO undermines other programs aimed at supporting the peace process. Beyond that threat to peace, humanitarian demining and UXO clearance programs, as well as other humanitarian programs that assist civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh, build goodwill towards the United States that could make American programming to prepare populations for peace more effective.

To gain a better understanding of how much demining and UXO clearance remains to be done, we recommend that funding be appropriated for an independent assessment of remaining contamination from mines and UXO in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as the risk that contamination poses to civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. The independent assessment should be either an independent review of an existing survey that has received U.S. funding and is currently

ongoing, or a new independent survey; the implementing agency would decide which option best suits the circumstances. This independent assessment will help the Subcommittee and the Administration determine what levels of funding are appropriate for future years. This funding should be appropriated in addition to funding for FY 2021 mine clearance, as there are identified minefields that can be cleared while the assessment is ongoing.

To continue saving civilian lives, build goodwill towards the United States, and better understand the extent of remaining mine and UXO contamination in Nagorno-Karabakh, we ask that all three of the following provisions be included in the FY 2021 appropriations for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs:

- Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$1.5 million shall be made available to fund demining and landmine risk education programs in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Robust funding for Nagorno-Karabakh-based regional rehabilitation services for survivors of landmine injuries and individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities.
- Funding for an independent assessment of remaining contamination from mines and unexploded ordnance in Nagorno-Karabakh and the risk that contamination poses to civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. The independent assessment shall be either an independent review of an ongoing contamination survey or a new independent survey. The appropriate congressional committees shall receive regular updates on the assessment's progress and the assessment results once completed.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and for your work to support America's long tradition of humanitarian assistance.

Sincerely,