



# Armenian National Committee of America

1711 N Street NW | Washington DC 20036 | Tel: (202) 775-1918 | Fax: (202) 775-1918 [anca@anca.org](mailto:anca@anca.org) | [www.anca.org](http://www.anca.org)

## **ANCA Policy Brief: Armenian American Policy Priorities**

### **1. Enforcing Prohibitions on Military Assistance to Azerbaijan**

Under Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, the U.S. is prohibited from providing military assistance to Azerbaijan. Congress adopted this measure in response to Azerbaijan's military assault and blockade against Armenia and Artsakh during the first Nagorno-Karabakh war (1988-1994) following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In 2002, Congress amended Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act to grant the President authority to waive its restrictions on an annual basis, citing national security interests and the need for cooperation in the Global War on Terror. From that point forward, every U.S. administration—Republican and Democrat alike—routinely exercised this waiver authority each year, enabling military and other forms of assistance to Azerbaijan without meaningful Congressional oversight.

This uninterrupted flow of U.S. military assistance, despite Azerbaijan's repeated violations of international law, emboldened the Aliyev regime—fueling its war crimes and ongoing aggression against Armenia and Artsakh. In the wake of Azerbaijan's brutal blockade and genocidal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh in 2023—and under mounting bipartisan Congressional pressure—the Biden Administration, after waiving the restrictions in 2021-2023, broke with over two decades of precedent and enforced Section 907 restrictions in 2024, marking the first time since the provision's amendment that the waiver was not exercised.

On March 27th, Representatives Mike Lawler (R-NY), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), and Gabe Amo (D-RI) led a bipartisan Congressional letter to Secretary of State Marco Rubio - signed by sixty lawmakers - urging the Trump Administration to enforce Section 907.

**ANCA Request:** The ANCA calls on members to urge the Trump Administration to uphold the enforcement of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and commit to ensuring no further U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan.

### **2. Imposing Magnitsky Sanctions Against Azerbaijani War Criminals & Ensuring the Release of Unjustly Detained Armenian POWs and Political Prisoners.**

**The Global Magnitsky Act** authorizes the President to impose economic sanctions and deny entry into the United States to foreign officials responsible for gross human rights violations.

During and since the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, Azerbaijan perpetrated grave human rights violations – including the torture of prisoners of war and civilian captives, the extrajudicial killing of civilians, the summary execution of unarmed Armenian servicemembers, and other war crimes.

Azerbaijan continues to arbitrarily detain at least 23 known Armenian prisoners of war – including Armenian servicemembers detained during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, civilians abducted and detained during the Artsakh blockade, and Artsakh officials and political leaders captured during the genocidal ethnic cleansing of the region in September 2023. International rights groups have noted that Armenian POWs and political prisoners have faced severe torture and psychological abuse in detention.

Azerbaijan has recently commenced sham trials against Armenian detainees, denying their fundamental rights to legal due process – and violating international humanitarian law. Furthermore, Azerbaijan recently expelled the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) – the only entity authorized to visit Armenian prisoners – jeopardizing the safety and wellbeing of detainees. To date, Azerbaijan has faced no repercussions for its egregious violation of international law.

**ANCA Request:** The ANCA calls on members to support efforts to enforce Global Magnitsky Act Sanctions against Azerbaijani officials responsible for war crimes to leverage the immediate and unconditional release of Armenian prisoners and civilian captives.

### **3. Supporting a Just, Dignified and Durable Peace in the South Caucasus**

On March 13th, it was announced that Armenia and Azerbaijan had concluded negotiations on the terms of a peace agreement. The agreement includes provisions requiring Armenia to withdraw its legal petitions against Azerbaijan before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the removal of European and third-party border monitors. Azerbaijan has imposed preconditions on ratifying an agreement not previously discussed during negotiations – demanding the dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group, and changes to Armenia’s constitution. Furthermore, the peace agreement includes no provisions for the release of unlawfully detained Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives.

In the days following the conclusion of negotiations, Azerbaijan continuously accused Armenia of ceasefire violations – which European border monitors have refuted. That same week, reports emerged that Azerbaijani forces had opened fire on Armenian positions in southern Armenia. There are concerns Azerbaijan’s claims are an attempt to manufacture a pretext for military escalation.

The **ANCA’s position** is that a just, durable, and dignified peace is not possible in the absence of accountability, tangible security guarantees for Armenia, and a pathway to the safe, protected, and dignified return of Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh – as is their right under international law.

**ANCA Request:** The ANCA calls on Congressional leaders to support efforts urging the Trump Administration to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its efforts to delay and derail peace talks – and to deter the risk of escalation in the region by imposing sanctions against Azerbaijani war criminals, and prohibiting U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan.

### **4. Safeguarding the Rights of Vulnerable Minority Communities in Syria**

Following the fall of the Assad regime at the hands of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) – and amid the ongoing assault on northern Syria’s Kurdish community by Turkey-backed extremists – it is imperative that the U.S. takes measures to safeguard the rights of vulnerable minority groups in Syria. This includes Armenians, Alawites, Druze, Yezidis, Kurds, and historic Christian communities (including Chaldean, Syriac, Assyrian, and Melkite peoples) among others, integral to the cultural lineage of Syria.

Amid recent escalations that resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians, targeting members of Syria’s Alawite minority, there are serious concerns for the safety and security of minority communities – particularly given Hayat Tahrir al-Sham’s track record of grave and widespread violations of religious freedom and human rights against religious minorities during the Syrian Civil War.

**ANCA Request:** The ANCA urges members to promote efforts to guarantee the rights of Syria’s vulnerable communities and not to normalize ties with the new Syrian authorities until tangible guarantees for the political, economic, and cultural rights of minority communities are in place. Additionally, the ANCA calls on members to demand the removal of Turkish forces from Northern Syria.

## **5. Protecting Jerusalem’s Christian Armenian Quarter**

The Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem is the longest continuously inhabited quarter of the Old City, with an Armenian presence dating back to the 4th century AD – when Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity. The Armenian Quarter has served as both a place of pilgrimage for Christians globally, as well as a place of sanctuary for Armenians fleeing the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

Over the last year, land developers and settlers have launched armed attacks to violently seize the Armenian Quarter from its local residents to construct luxury hotels and other buildings that would result in the eviction and displacement of Armenian Christian families that have lived in the Old City for centuries. Additionally, Jerusalem municipal authorities have sought to initiate a foreclosure process against the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem over a tax dispute – bypassing formal dispute-resolution processes.

The Armenian Patriarchate operates hospitals, schools, eldercare facilities and provides other essential services to the city’s ancient Armenian community. The ongoing assault against the Armenian Quarter represents an existential threat not only to Jerusalem’s Armenian community but would set a dangerous precedent that undermines the Christian presence in the Old City as a whole.

**ANCA Recommendation:** The ANCA urges members to call on the Trump Administration to engage directly with the State of Israel to ensure the protection of Jerusalem’s ancient Armenian community.

## **6. Delivering Robust Humanitarian Assistance to Armenian Refugees**

Azerbaijan’s ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh displaced over 120,000 Armenians, who are now refugees in the Republic of Armenia. Artsakh Armenians have faced challenges in access to housing, employment, social services, medical and psychological care, and other basic needs.

Since the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh, the United States has provided a meager amount of humanitarian assistance to displaced Artsakh Armenians – approximately \$21 million, or roughly \$175 per displaced person. The assistance provided by the U.S. to date does not come close to meeting the needs of Artsakh’s refugees – despite commitments by the Biden Administration that humanitarian assistance would be allocated under the 2024 national security supplemental. USAID-funded needs assessments identified that the humanitarian response to the Artsakh refugee crisis would require up to \$2 billion in assistance.

**ANCA Request:** The ANCA urges the Trump Administration to provide an humanitarian exemption on U.S. foreign assistance to Armenia, to ensure vital humanitarian assistance reaches the 120,000 Armenians forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh who face challenges in access to housing, food, employment, medical assistance, social services and other essential needs.

