



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

May 6, 2021

The Honorable
Frank Pallone
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Pallone:

Thank you for your February 19 letter identifying bipartisan congressional priorities in the South Caucasus. The United States has a strategic interest in promoting democracy, prosperity, security and stability in the region and the Department of State appreciates the opportunity to engage with Congress on these matters.

The Biden-Harris Administration welcomes the cessation of fighting since November 10. Much work remains to be done, however, to avoid a return to violence. This includes achieving a peaceful and sustainable negotiated political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and addressing the humanitarian aspects of last year's fighting. The Administration recognizes that a comprehensive policy toward the South Caucasus region is one that supports our national security, respects human rights, and reflects our democratic values.

The Administration agrees that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group has a key role to play in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The United States will continue to urge the sides to re-engage as soon as possible with the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to negotiate a comprehensive political settlement based on the Helsinki Final Act principles of refraining from the threat or use of force, respecting the territorial integrity of participating States, and respecting the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

The Administration continues to call out Turkish Government behavior that raises concerns and to urge Turkey to comply with its own laws and international commitments as a NATO Ally. The Administration also has returned human rights and rule of law to the bilateral agenda. At the same time, the United States and

Turkey share interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, and ensuring regional stability. More broadly, it is important that we keep Turkey anchored to transatlantic ties and the NATO Alliance rather than taking steps that push it closer to Russia, China, or other authoritarian states.

As the United States and Armenia look forward this year to celebrating 30 years of diplomatic relations following Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union, the United States remains committed to supporting Armenia's democratic and economic development, both diplomatically and through foreign assistance. U.S. assistance programs involving Armenia's government, civil society, and independent media have sought to help Armenian society realize its aspirations for effective, representative, and accountable governance and the free exchange of ideas. U.S. economic assistance to Armenia works to support trade and energy diversification, promote greater rural development, and help the economy recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

In response to crises over the past year, the United States provided assistance to Armenia to address the pandemic, tackle urgent humanitarian needs, and move toward peace and prosperity. This includes more than \$5 million in humanitarian assistance to support the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international and non-governmental organizations to aid affected populations in the wake of last year's conflict. Much of those funds, as well as more than \$4 million in supplemental funds provided to Armenia for its COVID-19 response, have directly helped Armenian citizens and thousands of other individuals who were displaced by the recent fighting.

On April 24, President Biden remembered the lives of the 1.5 million who perished in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide 106 years ago and recommitted the United States to preventing such an atrocity from ever occurring again. The Administration recognizes the significant needs in the region and continues to monitor developments while encouraging other partners to provide humanitarian support as well. The Departments of State and Defense will continue to look for opportunities to strengthen Armenia's resilience through assistance aimed at promoting security, democratic governance, and economic growth.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please let us know how we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Naz Durakoglu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N" and "D".

Naz Durakoglu
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs