



# Armenian National Committee of America

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## ANCA Policy Brief: U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Armenia and Azerbaijan

In September 2023, following a 10-month humanitarian blockade, Azerbaijan launched a military assault on Nagorno-Karabakh, [forcibly displacing the region's entire Armenian population](#). The over 100,000 Armenians ethnically cleansed from Nagorno-Karabakh sought refuge in Armenia, where they now face dire challenges in access to housing, food, employment, medical care, social services, and basic staples.

Despite the statements of former Acting Assistant Secretary of State Yuri Kim before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last year [noting](#) that the U.S. “*will not countenance any action to ethnically cleanse Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh*” – and a [commitment](#) by current Assistant Secretary James O’Brien before the House Foreign Relations Committee that there would be “*no business as usual*” with Azerbaijan – **Baku has faced no material consequences for its military assault on Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023, nor its assault on the region in 2020 which saw the targeting of civilian [infrastructure](#) including [hospitals](#), the use of [prohibited weapons](#), and the summary [execution of civilians](#).**

Azerbaijan continues to [occupy almost 100 square miles of Armenian sovereign territory](#) in the southern regions of Syunik, Vayots Dzor, and Gegharkunik, following military incursions into Armenia in May 2021, and September 2022. In recent months, Azerbaijan has used coercive diplomacy and threats of force to impose demands on Armenia – resulting in Armenia’s [unilateral concession](#) of four villages in the northern region of Tavush.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan continues to violate the [orders of the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) to prevent the mistreatment of captured Armenians and ensure the protection of Armenian cultural heritage sites. Azerbaijan continues to detain at least 23 Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives – including former representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh’s government – which human rights groups have noted are subject to [torture and abuse](#) in [custody](#). Independent experts have also [verified](#) Azerbaijan’s escalating destruction of Armenian cultural heritage sites in territories captured through force last year.

Additionally, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in a recent ruling, [ordered](#) Azerbaijan to ensure the safe return of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. These calls to uphold the [right of return](#) for Nagorno-Karabakh’s Armenians have been [affirmed on several occasions by U.S. officials](#), although no material action has been taken to facilitate an internationally protected right of return – nor to ensure that the return of Armenians is made a condition of any peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

**ANCA Position:** The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) maintains that **accountability is a prerequisite for a just and durable peace in the region** – including 1) enforcing prohibitions on U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan pursuant to Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, 2) the imposition of Global Magnitsky Act Sanctions on Azerbaijani officials responsible for war crimes, 3) an investigation into Azerbaijani human rights abuses pursuant to Section 502B(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act, and; 4) a commitment to ensuring the right of Armenians to return to their homes under international protections. This must be matched with a **robust humanitarian response** to meet the needs of Armenian refugees in Armenia. The U.S. government has deployed approximately \$21 million in humanitarian assistance – **significantly less than the estimated \$2 billion needed to support those displaced.**

## ANCA-Endorsed Legislative Initiatives

- On September 27, 2023, U.S. Senators Whitehouse (D-RI), Reed (D-RI), Cassidy (R-LA), and U.S. Representatives Magaziner (D-RI), Bilirakis (R-FL), and Pallone (D-NJ) sent a [bipartisan and bicameral letter](#) to the Departments of State and Treasury calling for sanctions on individuals in the government of Azerbaijan who are associated with the military attacks against and brutal blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh. **The letter was signed by 96 members of the House and Senate.**
- In October 2023, Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Representative Anna Eshoo (D-CA) led a [letter to President Biden](#) urging strong U.S. action to alleviate the unfolding humanitarian disaster in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and hold Azerbaijan accountable for engaging in ethnic cleansing against Artsakh's Armenian population. **The letter was supported by 75 members of the U.S. House.**
- In November 2023, Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) brought [S.3000 – the Armenian Protection Act](#) – to the floor of the U.S. Senate. The bill, **which passed by unanimous consent**, would prohibit the U.S. president from exercising their waiver authority over Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act – which prohibits U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan due to its use of military force and blockades against Armenia. **Its House companion, H.R.7288 – introduced by Rep. Lawler (R-NY) – has been referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee.**
- In December 2023, Rep. Eshoo (D-CA) and Senator Padilla (D-CA) led a [bipartisan and bicameral letter to Congressional Leadership](#) requesting military and humanitarian aid for Armenia in the national security supplemental. **The letter was supported by 60 members of the House and Senate.**
- In February 2024, Senators Markey (D-MA) and Cassidy (R-LA) introduced [S.Res.540](#), a bipartisan resolution requiring a report on Azerbaijan's human rights practices pursuant to Section 502B(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act. The resolution has been [co-sponsored by 13 bipartisan Senate colleagues](#).
- In April 2024, Senators Markey (D-MA), Cassidy (R-LA), Peters (D-MA), and Tillis (R-NC) sent a [letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#) urging the State Department to prioritize the release of Armenian hostages as a condition of any peace deal reached by Armenia and Azerbaijan. The letter also calls on Secretary Blinken to advocate for the right of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians to return to their homes under international guarantees, as well as to impose sanctions against Azerbaijani officials responsible for human rights violations.
- On April 26, 2024, Representatives Dina Titus (D-NV) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) introduced the **Azerbaijan Sanctions Review Act – H.R.8141** – requiring the Administration to conduct a review of forty-four Azerbaijani officials to determine whether they are subject to Magnitsky sanctions following the ethnic cleansing of Armenians from Artsakh and the repression of political opposition in Azerbaijan.
- In June 2024, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) sent a [letter to President Biden](#) calling for additional humanitarian aid to Armenia to assist Nagorno-Karabakh refugees forcibly displaced by Azerbaijan. The letter also urged the President to advocate for the right of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians to return to their homes under international protections and impose sanctions against Azerbaijani officials responsible war crimes. **The letter was signed by 20 Senators.**
- On June 24th, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) sent a [letter to Secretary Blinken](#) urging the Biden Administration to prioritize the protection of at-risk Armenian heritage sites in Artsakh during all future diplomatic engagements with Azerbaijani officials. **The bipartisan letter was cosigned by 47 U.S. House members.**
- On June 27, 2024, Representatives Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and Chris Smith (R-NJ) [introduced](#) a bipartisan resolution calling on President Biden to formally designate Azerbaijan's forced deportation of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians as ethnic cleansing, prohibit military aid to Azerbaijan, sanction Azerbaijani war criminals, and guarantee the right of return for Armenians to their homes in Artsakh.

