



Armenian National Committee of America

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ANCA Policy Brief: The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act

During its military assault on Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) in 2020, and the subsequent blockade and genocidal ethnic cleansing of the region in 2023, Azerbaijan perpetrated grave war crimes against the region's Armenian population – including but not limited to the arbitrary detention and abuse of prisoners of war and civilian captives, the extrajudicial killing of civilians, and the deliberate targeting of civilians. Despite this, Azerbaijan has faced no accountability for its flagrant violations of international law.

Azerbaijan continues to detain at least 19 known Armenian prisoners of war, civilian captives, and former Artsakh officials – including past presidents, foreign ministers, and parliamentary leaders. In February, 2026, Azerbaijan [sentenced](#) 16 Armenian hostages to extended sentences of 15 years to life in prison. These sentences marked the culmination of year-long [sham trials](#), during which Armenian detainees were subject to torture and abuse, denied due process, deprived of their fundamental legal rights, and charged on political and racially motivated grounds. In September 2025, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) closed its mission in Azerbaijan after being [ordered](#) to leave by the Azerbaijani government. The ICRC was the only organization authorized to visit Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan's unjust detention.

Despite ongoing negotiations, the draft peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan initialed during a trilateral summit at the White House last August contains **no provision to guarantee the release of unlawfully detained Armenian captives**. Additionally, at the Munich Security Conference in February, 2026, President Aliyev [declared](#) he would not grant Armenian detainees clemency.

In November 2025, Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) led a [letter](#) signed by 26 Senate colleagues – including Leader Schumer (D-NY) – urging the Administration to apply pressure on Azerbaijan to secure the release of Armenian prisoners. In December 2025, the State Department responded – noting that they had called for public and fair trials of detainees. Despite this, Azerbaijan proceeded with the unlawful sentencing of Armenians – widely condemned by international human rights organizations including [Amnesty International](#) as “an affront to all victims of crimes under international law.”

Urge Enforcement of Global Magnitsky Sanctions Against Azerbaijani War Criminals

In light of Azerbaijan's unlawful sentencing of Armenian prisoners of war, the ANCA is urging members of Congress to support legislative efforts to impose meaningful pressure on Azerbaijan to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Armenian prisoners. The sentencing of Armenian detainees significantly undermines trust and confidence in peace talks. As such, the ANCA continues to call for the enforcement of targeted **Global Magnitsky Act Sanctions** against Azerbaijani officials responsible for the unlawful detention, abuse, and sentencing of Armenian prisoners of war.

ANCA Requests:

- 1) **Support upcoming legislative efforts** urging the Trump Administration to enforce Global Magnitsky Sanctions against Azerbaijani officials responsible for human rights violations, including the unlawful detention of Armenian POWs.
- 2) **Public Statements:** As we mark three years since the genocidal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh, the ANCA urges Congressional offices to **issue public statements, statements for the record, and/or social media posts calling for the immediate release of all unlawfully detained Armenian POWs.**