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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

November 29, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

CC: The Honorable Beth Van Schaack
Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice
Department of State
2201 C St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

While terrible tragedies elsewhere have diverted the world's attention, I write to ensure that we remain focused on holding the Aliyev regime accountable for its brazen campaign of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh and continue to support Armenians who were forced to flee.

As you are well aware, in September 2023, President Ilham Aliyev launched a military campaign that drove around 100,000 Armenians out of their homes, and during which Azerbaijani forces reportedly killed and wounded civilians. These attacks were not only a clear violation of the November 2020 ceasefire but also reportedly involved heinous atrocities.

Prior to the military invasion, Azerbaijan was effectively imposing a humanitarian blockade on the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, preventing the delivery of food, medicine, and basic humanitarian supplies. Beyond the blockade, the State Department's 2022 Human Right Report cites numerous reports of Azerbaijani forces committing extrajudicial killings of Armenians. Furthermore, both before and after September, Azerbaijan has continued its well-documented practice of seizing and destroying Armenian cultural property in areas it controls, in further pursuit of its efforts to erase Armenian history and culture.

While Azerbaijan thus far is abiding by the terms of the September 20, 2023 ceasefire, I remain deeply concerned that Azerbaijan could take further military action to achieve additional political gains, particularly in regards to the so-called Zangezur corridor.

I strongly encourage you to continue to work with international partners and organizations to support accountability for the Aliyev regime's actions. Specifically, I would like to know what steps you have taken and plan to take regarding the following:

- Supporting efforts to substantiate and collect evidence regarding the Aliyev regime's potential commission of war crimes and other atrocities;
- Holding Azerbaijani officials accountable for any such acts, including the application of potential sanctions and visa restrictions;
- Urging appropriate international justice tribunals to pursue accountability for Azerbaijani officials;
- Making clear to Azerbaijan that aggression against its neighbors is unacceptable;
- Supporting Armenians displaced in the September 2023 assault;

It is critically important that the United States continue our commitment to prevent the commission of atrocities, protect vulnerable civilians, and hold those responsible for atrocities accountable for their actions. We must send a clear message to those who believe they can operate with impunity.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
Chairman