

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

As you work to foster peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, we urge you to engage all parties in this unresolved conflict to ensure the collective, protected, and dignified return of forcibly displaced Armenians to their indigenous homeland of Nagorno Karabakh. Taking this action is in direct accordance with international law and in pursuit of a just and lasting peace in the region.

Azerbaijan's military assault on Nagorno Karabakh in September 2023 – coming in the wake of a ten-month blockade of food, fuel, medicine and other humanitarian supplies – forcibly displaced the region's entire Christian Armenian population of 120,000 people, many of whom are now refugees in the Republic of Armenia. Since its deadly military takeover of Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan has engaged in the systematic destruction of Christian Armenian cultural heritage sites including ancient churches and monasteries. Azerbaijan has also undertaken the widespread ransacking and demolition of civilian property and public infrastructure, in an attempt to deny the possibility of return for the region's displaced Armenian population.

We welcomed your recent testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee confirming U.S. support for a peace process that averts the risk of escalation by Azerbaijan and ensures the release of all arbitrarily detained Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives. As part of this ongoing process, we encourage you to address the issue of a collective and protected return of Armenians to Nagorno Karabakh.

We make this request as a recognition that the right of populations displaced by war to return to their homes is a fundamental principle of international law. In December 2023, the International Court of Justice issued a provisional order compelling Azerbaijan to ensure the safe and secure return of Armenians to Nagorno Karabakh. Under the previous Administration, several senior State Department officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Jim O'Brien, confirmed that the U.S. had "urged Azerbaijan to ensure all ethnic Armenians who have departed Nagorno Karabakh are guaranteed a safe, dignified, and sustainable return, should they so choose, with their rights and security guaranteed."¹

¹ House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs. (2023, November 15). <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA14/20231115/116574/HHRG-118-FA14-Wstate-OBrienJ-20231115.pdf>

Specifically, we encourage the Administration to actively engage with international partners and multilateral institutions to facilitate the return of Armenians to Nagorno Karabakh. This includes through diplomatic support for a recent measure adopted by the Swiss Parliament known as the “Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno Karabakh”, which would establish an international negotiation platform to mediate a safe, secure and internationally guaranteed return of Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh.²

We also note and welcome the Final Statement of the International Conference on the Preservation of Armenian Religious, Cultural, and Historical Heritage in Nagorno Karabakh.³ The conference was held under the auspices of the World Council of Churches on May 27-28, 2025, in Bern, Switzerland, where they urged “governments and international bodies, particularly Switzerland where we are meeting today, to take diplomatic and legal steps based on OSCE and other conventions to prevent further erasure of Armenian cultural heritage, support the return of the people to their land and to work actively towards the liberation of the Armenian hostages in Baku.”

We look forward to your response, and to the opportunity to work with you to promote a just, durable and dignified peace in the region that ensures the fundamental rights of displaced Armenians to return to their indigenous homeland without fear of renewed violence and persecution.

Sincerely,



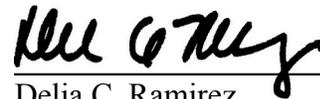
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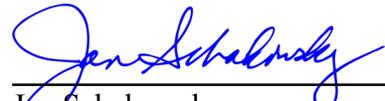
² Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno-Karabakh. (2025, May 26).

<https://www.swisspeacekarabakh.com/en>

³ World Council of Churches. (2025, May 27). <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/as-armenian-heritage-conference-opens-we-are-not-here-to-be-bystanders>



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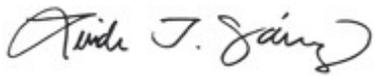
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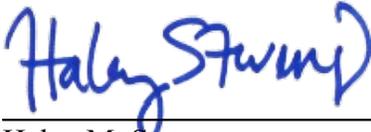
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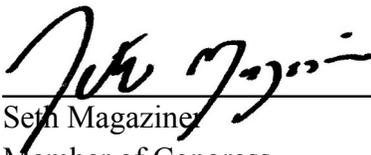
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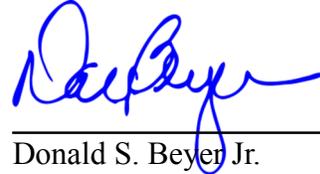
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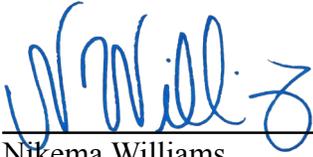
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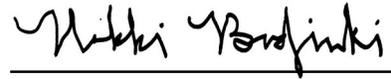
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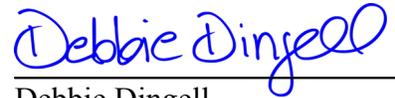
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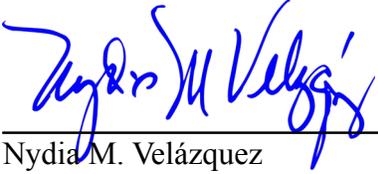
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