

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2021

Hon. Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We wish to register our concern with your decision on April 26 to waive the longstanding statutory restriction on U.S. aid to Azerbaijan under Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act. This action is particularly distressing following Baku's hostilities last fall against the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and the delayed release of the remaining Armenian prisoners of war and detainees. While we appreciate the willingness of State Department officials including Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent and Ambassador Andrew Schofer to discuss these issues, we believe the issuance of this waiver is a mistake and is not in line with Congressional intent. We will consider legislative action in response to clarify the waiver authority.

We are concerned that the State Department did not fully consider Azerbaijan's lack of progress in ceasing its blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), and instead moved forward with this waiver without detailing serious national security concerns. This year's waiver comes despite last year's 44-day war, Azerbaijan's embrace of Al Qaeda-linked Syrian mercenaries, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's renunciation of further diplomacy to resolve outstanding issues. These actions are inconsistent with provisions of the Section 907 waiver and demonstrate the dire need for changes to the Administration's waiver process to prevent further aid from going to Azerbaijan until they make demonstrable changes to their behavior.

In light of the Section 907 waiver, we urgently request that you suspend any existing military or security assistance to Azerbaijan, including aid provided under Section 333 Building Partner Capacity programs, and block any new U.S. aid that directly or indirectly contributes to Azerbaijan's military operations, activities, or capabilities. The more than \$100 million in such aid from U.S. taxpayers provided to Azerbaijan in recent years materially developed Baku's military and border monitoring capabilities, allowing the Aliyev government to shift resources toward offensive operations against Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and Armenia. While it was positive to hear on a recent call that the Administration does not foresee providing additional

Section 333 assistance beyond what has already been provided, the amount provided to date is itself disturbing.

The oil-rich Aliyev government, which continues to illegally hold Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians six months after the end of hostilities, neither needs nor deserves U.S. assistance. American taxpayers should not be asked to subsidize Azerbaijan so long as they continue to take destabilizing action in the region, attack Armenians living in their indigenous homeland, and hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the conflict. As such, we ask for the immediate termination of all U.S. military or security aid to Azerbaijan.

Thank you for your immediate attention to these concerns.

David G. Valadao
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

Adam Schiff
Member of Congress

Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sanchez
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Devin Nunes
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
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Haley Stevens
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Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress