Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 5, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We recognize the work this administration has done to mediate peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Furthermore, we note efforts by Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve longstanding border disputes through consistent talks. However, we are concerned that amid these positive steps Azerbaijan continues to undermine the peace process. Azerbaijan's decision to sentence unlawfully detained Armenian prisoners of war demonstrates a willingness to upend stability. Additionally, the presence of Azerbaijani military forces in more than 200 square kilometers of Armenian territory creates asymmetry in ongoing talks.[1] This context illustrates Azerbaijan's fragile commitment to the process and emphasizes the importance of the United States remaining engaged on this issue. As Azerbaijan's conduct threatens to compromise the integrity of the peace process, we note with concern the recent decision to reauthorize the waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act [U.S. Public Law No: 102-511]. Despite the issuance of the waiver, we urge your administration to withhold U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan if they continue to jeopardize the success of negotiations. The United States has a critical role in ensuring that ongoing talks yield results that advance peace and security in the region.

In February 2026, Azerbaijan sentenced 16 Armenian detainees to extended terms ranging from 15 years to life in prison. These sentences followed a series of trials that were widely rebuked by international human rights organizations, legal experts, and the European Parliament as a miscarriage of justice.[2] Azerbaijan continues to imprison scores of domestic journalists, opposition leaders, and activists on politically motivated and unfounded charges. The decision to proceed with the trials and sentencing of Armenian detainees is consistent with Azerbaijan's practice of denying fundamental due process and rule of law. The detainees included political and military leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh who have been held illegally since Azerbaijan's military assault on the region in 2023. Almost three years have passed since Azerbaijan's attack on Nagorno-Karabakh forcibly displaced over 100,000 Armenian inhabitants in what has been widely characterized as an act of ethnic cleansing.[3] In addition to forced displacement there continue to be reports of the destruction of Armenian Churches in Nagorno-Karabakh.[4] The pattern of cultural erasure in the region and the decision to move forward with sentencing these individuals calls into question Azerbaijan's genuine commitment to long term peace and stability.

On April 29, 2026, Armenia and Azerbaijan held the thirteenth meeting to discuss border delimitation. Addressing longstanding border disputes remains a critical task to ensure the stability of any future peace agreement. So far, the only practical outcome from these talks has come from Armenia's efforts to address Soviet-era territorial disputes. In May of 2024 Armenia returned four Azerbaijani enclave villages that had been under Armenian control since the first Karabakh

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[1] Hayk Hovhannisyan, *Mapping the Occupation: 241 km² of Armenian Territory Remains Under Azerbaijani Control*, Civilnet (Oct. 23, 2025) (https://civilnet.am/en/news/980654)

[2] Nailia Bagirova, *Azerbaijan summons EU envoy in row over treatment of Karabakh Armenians,* Reuters (May 1, 2026)(https://www.reuters.com/world/azerbaijan-summons-eu-envoy-row-over-treatment-karabakh-armenians-2026-05-01/)

[3] *Why Are There No Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh?,* Freedom House (2024) (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/NO-ARMENIANS-IN-NK-DDF-FH_FACT-FINDING_REPORT_FULL_VERSION.pdf)

[4] Amos Chapple and Mark Kurtov, *Cathedral, Church Demolished In Nagorno-Karabakh*, RadioFreeEurope RadioLiberty (Apr. 27, 2026) (https://www.rferl.org/a/cathedral-church-demolished-nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan-armenia-conflict/33743489.html)

war.[5] However, these efforts have been complicated by Azerbaijan's ongoing occupation of an estimated 241.4 sq kilometers of Armenian territory, following military encroachments into Armenia in 2021 and 2022.[6] Azerbaijan's recent encroachments and entrenched military presence within Armenia's internationally recognized borders presents a security challenge and sets the stage for asymmetric negotiations. A just outcome to these talks is imperative to maintaining the integrity of Armenian sovereignty and ensuring long-term stability in the region. We encourage the administration to use existing leverage, such as withholding military assistance, to ensure positive outcomes.

Following a White House summit with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan last year, the waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act was extended.[7] Although the summit was an important step in the right direction there is still significant work to be done to address unresolved humanitarian and security issues. It is clear, that the decision to waive Section 907 has not induced Azerbaijan's engagement on ensuring the release of detainees. As a result, we are concerned that Azerbaijan's inconsistent behavior jeopardizes the prospect of a just and long-lasting peace in the region – and that the continued waiver of Section 907 without a commitment to addressing these concerns will only further encourage destabilizing actions.

June 23rd, 2026, marked the 1000th day of unlawful detention for the Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan's custody. It is imperative that the United States applies meaningful pressure on Azerbaijan to ensure their release, as required under international law. We call on the administration to engage with Azerbaijan to secure the release of detainees and encourage the removal of Azerbaijani military forces from sovereign Armenian land. If meaningful steps are not taken, we urge your administration to withhold U.S. military assistance in order to demonstrate the United States' commitment to ensuring all parties take the peace process seriously.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to the opportunity to work with you on efforts to ensure peace and stability in the region.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

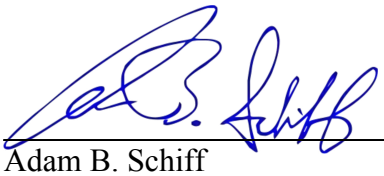
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

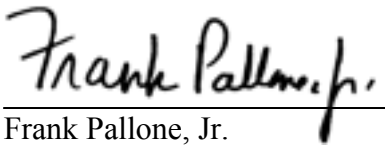
[5] Sossi Tatikyan, *The Enclave Issue Between Armenia and Azerbaijan*, EVN Report (May 21, 2026) (https://evnreport.com/politics/the-enclave-issue-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan/)

[6] Hayk Hovhannisyan, *Mapping the Occupation: 241 km² of Armenian Territory Remains Under Azerbaijani Control*, Civilnet (Oct. 23, 2025) (https://civilnet.am/en/news/980654)

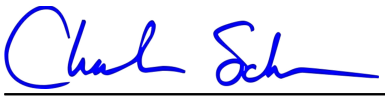
[7] *Extension of Waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act with Respect to Assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan,* Department of State (Aug. 08, 2025) (https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/08/15/2025-15682/extension-of-waiver-of-section-907-of-the-freedom-support-act-with-respect-to-assistance-to-the)



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



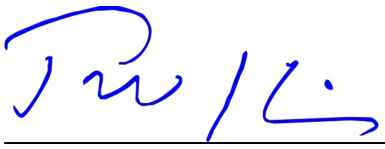
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



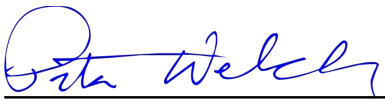
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



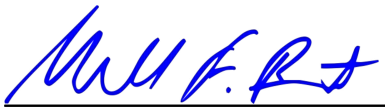
Alex Padilla
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Peter Welch
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Chris Van Hollen
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Michael F. Bennet
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Andy Kim
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Ruben Gallego
United States Senator

Elissa Slotkin
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Seth Magaziner
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Member of Congress

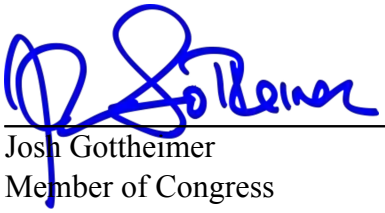
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



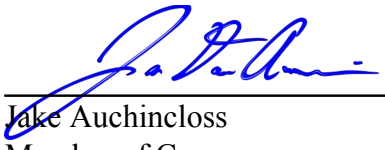
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



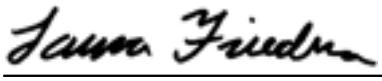
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



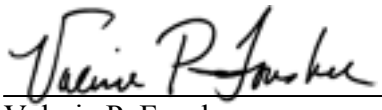
Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



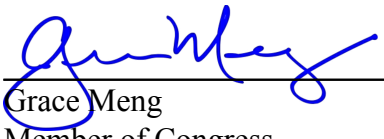
Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress



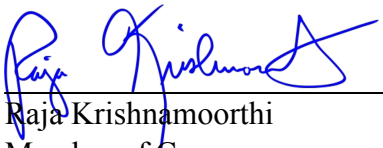
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



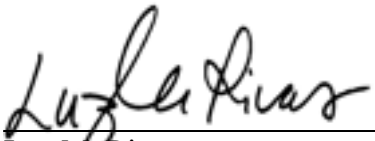
Grace Meng
Member of Congress



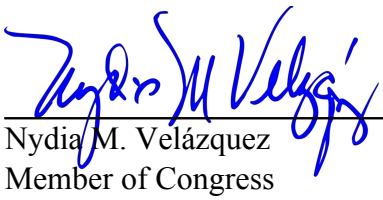
Young Kim
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Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Luz M. Rivas
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Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Laura A. Gillen
Member of Congress



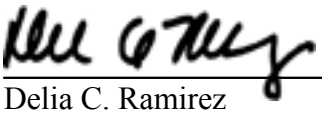
Mike Levin
Member of Congress



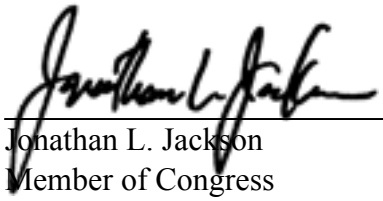
Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



George Whitesides
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



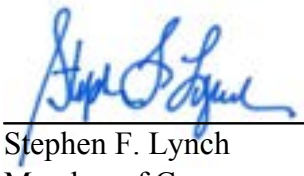
Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



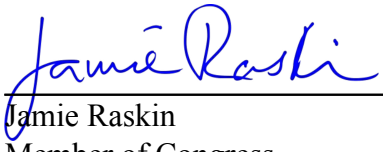
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



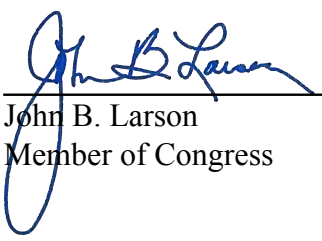
Zoe Lofgren
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Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
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Debbie Dingell
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Paul D. Tonko
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Wesley Bell
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Michael V. Lawler
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Sarah McBride
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Nicole Malliotakis
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David J. Taylor
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André Carey
Member of Congress

Vince Fong
Member of Congress

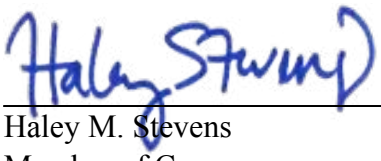
Mike Carey
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

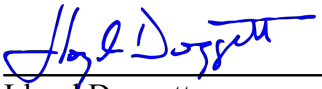
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



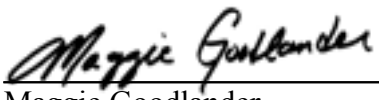
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress



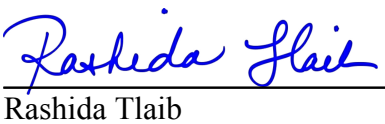
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



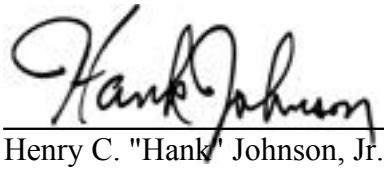
Maggie Goodlander
Member of Congress



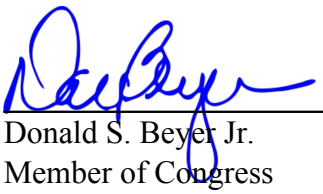
Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



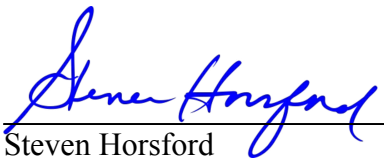
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



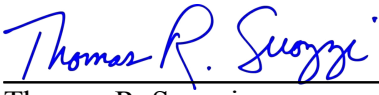
Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



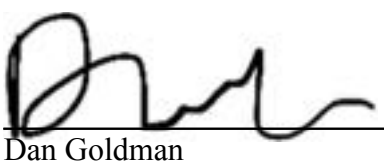
Susie Lee
Member of Congress



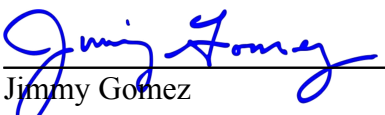
Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



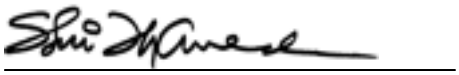
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress