



# ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

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April 5, 2016

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

On behalf of the Armenian Assembly of America, we are writing to request more effective United States action in light of the military offensive admittedly initiated by Azerbaijan with the support of Turkish military, personnel, and equipment on April 2 against Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. The offensive started with the killing of a 12-year-old boy and continued with the gruesome mutilation of an elderly Armenian couple.

We are hopeful that the cessation of hostilities announced today will hold. We were especially grateful to see the statement issued with the Russian Foreign Minister that “It was agreed that Russia, the U.S. and France, as co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, will step up their efforts to foster a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict....Sergey Lavrov and John Kerry condemned attempts by certain ‘external players’ to whip up the standoff around Karabakh.” We also fully support the statements of President Sargsyan to the Ambassadors of OSCE countries yesterday and the reactions of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

This is a time to strengthen the OSCE process. The Nagorno Karabakh Republic should resume its place as a negotiating party in the Minsk process and its officials should be allowed to travel to Washington and other countries freely.

Increasingly and without repercussion, Azerbaijan has flaunted the signed 1994 cease-fire agreement, targeting civilians in violation of international law. You, Ambassador Warlick, and others involved in resolving this armed conflict know full well that President Aliyev has intentionally escalated the violence against innocent civilians as pressure for Armenian concessions. In *RFE/RL* reports among others, Azerbaijan admitted to launching the offensive – which came hours after President Aliyev’s meeting with you in Washington, D.C. Such behavior must make it clear that Azerbaijan cannot be trusted to honor its commitments and must be held accountable for its egregious human rights violations.

In the Assembly’s testimony before Congress and in our meetings with Administration officials, we have repeatedly and consistently highlighted Azerbaijan’s militarization, war rhetoric, and substantial escalation of its cease-fire violations (see enclosed map), and urged the United States to stop the false equivalency between Azerbaijan’s actions and Armenians’ self-defense. The current situation demands much more than condemnation – a robust and immediate response from the United States is needed to

stop the pattern. Presidents Aliyev and Erdogan are very much responsible for this bloodshed and the failure to reach a just peace. They have consistently used violence to distract their publics and the international community from their own authoritarian and criminal behavior. Armenia and Karabakh deserve our full support in defending themselves.

For over two years now, both Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh have been calling for international monitors along the Line of Contact and for the cease-fire framework to be respected, with Azerbaijan saying it will not, and instead escalating its rhetoric and matching it with frontline fighting and shelling. In yesterday's *Wall Street Journal*, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry stated that it has given "the order to all troops, including rocket-artillery troops to be prepared to deliver crushing blows" to Stepanakert, the capital of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. *The Washington Post* also reported that the Azeri Defense Ministry stated that its soldiers "became shahids" – Muslim martyrs. We are deeply troubled by Azerbaijan's attempts to make this a religious conflict as well as reports of Azerbaijan's ties to ISIS.

The United States took a principled stand against Azeri aggression with the adoption of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, which stated that no U.S. funds may be "provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh." Given Azerbaijan's blatant violations and knowing of your leadership with respect to Section 907 while serving as a United States Senator, we urge you to fully enforce Section 907. There can be no U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan unless and until it ceases all military hostilities against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh and agrees to a path for a peaceful and just resolution of the conflict. Anything less risks further escalation and full-scale war.

We also recall President Obama's pledge to work "for a lasting and durable settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict that is agreeable to all parties, and based upon America's founding commitment to the principles of democracy and self-determination." We concur. The Nagorno Karabakh Republic has a right to defend its citizens and to live freely without being subjected to Azerbaijan's tyranny.

We appreciate your attention to this critically important matter and respectfully request a meeting to discuss concrete steps going forward.

Sincerely,



Anthony Barsamian  
Co-Chairman



Van Z. Krikorian  
Co-Chairman

Enclosure