



ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

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November 16, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Leahy:

On behalf of the Armenian Assembly of America, as Congress seeks to wrap up the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Appropriations bills, **I am writing to request the inclusion of an emergency \$100 million humanitarian aid package for the Armenian people in the final version of the FY 2021 State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill.**

As you know, this Fall, an unprovoked war was launched by Azerbaijan against the Armenian people. For six weeks from September 27 to November 9, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh were subjected to a military offensive by the government of Azerbaijan, backed by the Turkish military and jihadist mercenaries. As a result, thousands of soldiers were killed and wounded in defense of Artsakh, while hundreds of civilians became casualties. Upwards of one hundred thousand people fled their homes for safety from the incessant and indiscriminate bombing of towns and cities. Homes, hospitals, churches, schools, and other civilian structures were destroyed by missiles, cluster munitions, and strike drones.

In the absence of America's leadership, the Armenian people found themselves in a dire situation and its government was pressured into a Russian-brokered deal that seeks to negate America's long-standing role as a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group in negotiating a lasting peace agreement. The United States should not allow the corrupt and authoritarian regimes of Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan to sideline America's leadership and leave a vulnerable Christian nation at risk of yet another genocide. **America must do everything it can to ensure the safety and security of the Armenian people both in Armenia and in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as extend a robust emergency aid package to address the humanitarian crisis generated by Azerbaijan's ruthless war.**

The U.S. has previously provided support to strengthen Armenia's civil and political institutions, which achieved a significant victory in 2018 when that nation succeeded in holding free, fair, and transparent parliamentary elections. Armenia is a young democracy, and its newly strengthening civil institutions are being severely tested by inordinately large challenges. The rapidly expanding humanitarian crisis, precipitated by the Azerbaijani assault, threatens to undo the progress made to date, and destabilize Armenia and the wider region.

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has maintained a footprint in this corner of the world as a counterbalance to Russia. Unfortunately, the one-sided agreement cuts the U.S. out entirely from the negotiations. Consequently, the stabilizing influence of the United States in that critical region of the world risks being greatly diminished. Russia and Turkey, as we have seen in Syria and elsewhere, are expanding their influence, while the people of Armenia are confronting an increasingly tenuous political situation in the face of urgent humanitarian challenges.

The national interests of the United States rely on supporting democracies throughout the world, including in Armenia, and the U.S. should not stand idly by while authoritarian governments like Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan undermine our security.

The Armenian Assembly of America strongly urges Congress to provide \$100 million in emergency humanitarian aid for the Armenian people in the FY 2021 final appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Bryan Ardouny
Executive Director