

June 11, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20501

Cc: Secretary of State Antony Blinken
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

Dear President Biden:

We strongly urge you to use your upcoming meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to address his regime's direct military and economic support of Azerbaijani aggressions against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Armenia. A clear statement must be sent to Erdogan and his ally, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, that the United States is imminently prepared to withhold security aid and implement targeted economic sanctions unless Azerbaijani forces are removed from Armenian territory and all remaining Armenian detainees and prisoners of war are released from Azerbaijani custody.

Precedent shows that Erdogan and Aliyev will not halt their destabilizing actions and violations of international law until the United States takes significant action to hold them accountable. This was demonstrated when Azerbaijan launched an offensive attack against Artsakh last September with significant military assistance from Erdogan. The assault led to six weeks of devastating fighting with an estimated 5,000 people killed and over 100,000 ethnic Armenians forced to flee their homes in the region.


Erdogan's assistance during the war proved decisive as Azerbaijani forces were able to make rapid advances with the aid of Turkish-backed foreign mercenaries, many alleged to have ties with internationally recognized terrorist groups, Bayraktar TB2 strike drones that utilize American components and technology, and heavy weaponry, including the potentially illegal use of cluster and white phosphorus munitions. The United States' continued failure to appropriately pressure these aggressors enough to halt their deadly campaign only helped Aliyev's goals and led to more violence and significant human rights abuses in the region.

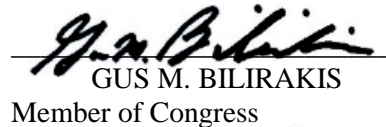
Unfortunately, global inaction continues to embolden Erdogan and Aliyev. Azerbaijan continues to hold an estimated 200 Armenian detainees and prisoners of war linked to the war, using them as bargaining chips for territorial negotiations in contravention of international human rights law. Azerbaijani forces have illegally crossed international borders, including in the last month, threatening the territorial sovereignty of Armenia along with the lives and livelihoods of civilians in those regions. Aliyev also refuses to negotiate in good faith with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs toward an equitable, lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. These moves are all made with the full-throated support of Erdogan and are calculated to test international willingness to use our economic and diplomatic influence to restrain regional aggressors.

We appreciate the statements your Administration has issued in recent weeks regarding Azerbaijan's illegal intrusion into Armenian territory, but we need to see those words turned into direct diplomatic action that will push back against the expansionist goals of these countries. We urge you to use your upcoming meeting with President Erdogan as an opportunity to demonstrate the United States' commitment to fostering democracies throughout the world and our willingness to stand up for human rights, especially in Armenia and Artsakh. Without strong American leadership, Turkey and Azerbaijan will continue to violate human rights and undermine democracy while destabilizing the region. The United States must make clear that there are consequences for these hostile activities.

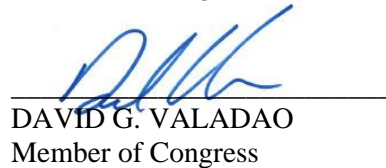
Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress


GUS M. BILIRAKIS
Member of Congress


JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress


DAVID G. VALADAO
Member of Congress


ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress