

April 16, 2024

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I have been working proactively during the past several months with U.S. Helsinki Executive Director Steven Schrage on matters pertaining to strengthening U.S.-Armenia relations, and supporting the pro-Western and anti-Kremlin political movements within Armenia. Our firm represents the National Democratic Alliance of Armenia (NDA), Armenia's largest pro-Western political party, which seeks Armenia's removal from the Russian orbit.

On November 19, 2023, Congressman Wilson, Congresswoman Spartz, and Dr. Schrage met with the leadership of NDA in Yerevan, Armenia (see press release here: <https://ajbever.com/en/press-statement/>).

One of the important topics discussed, during the 1.5 hour meeting, was the fact that the Armenian branch of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Azatutyun) provides minimal coverage of Armenia's pro-Western movement, and has even shown an active bias against Armenia's pro-Western political parties, such as NDA. To have a U.S. taxpayer funded entity attempting to undermine Armenia's pro-Western movement is both contrary to our values and interests. This is even more ironic, given that Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty had been originally founded to counter the Soviet Union and provide information to the oppressed peoples within the Soviet sphere. I had subsequently had additional meetings with Dr. Schrage, where we talked about this matter further. We then worked on a draft letter for Congressman Wilson to send to the US Agency for Global Media, which oversees Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (see attachment). Dr. Schrage and I spoke today, and he asked that I email you the letter for your review and next steps.

We appreciate Congressman Wilson's interest in and support for Armenia's pro-Western movement, and the aspirations of the Armenian people to break away from Russia's malign influence.

Both my colleague and myself are at your disposal for any questions.

THE LIVINGSTON GROUP, LLC PROVIDES REPRESENTATION FOR THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE, A PRO-WESTERN POLITICAL PARTY IN ARMENIA. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON.

The text to which the URL refers:



On November 19th, 2023, members of the Governing Council of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Jirayr Sefilian, Ara Papian, and Garo Yeghukian met with a delegation from the United States House of Representatives led by Congressman Joe Wilson (R-SC) and included Congresswoman Victoria Spartz (R-IN) and the Executive Director of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), Steven Schrage.

Congressman Wilson is the Chair of the joint Senate-Congress Helsinki Commission and serves as a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee where he is the Chair of the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia Subcommittee and a member of the Subcommittee on Europe. He is also the most senior member of the House Armed Services Committee where he is on the Subcommittees on Readiness and also Strategic Forces.

During the meeting, which lasted 1.5 hours, NDA leaders and the Congressional delegation discussed a wide range of topics, centering around the role that NDA can play in Yerevan and Washington in bringing Armenia closer to the United States and its allies and combating malign Russian influence in Armenia. NDA leaders urged their interlocutors to help secure the safe return of displaced population of Artsakh to their homes under international protection and possible sanctions against the Aliyev regime. Finally, NDA leaders shared with the Congressional delegation their criticism of the "Pashinyan peace plan", which not only de facto ignores the plight of the Armenian population of Artsakh but also undermines Armenia's long-term security and economic prosperity.

It should be noted that Congressman Wilson and Congresswoman Spartz are among the leading critics of Russia and its war in Ukraine in the United States' Congress and have led the charge to hold the Russian government accountable. At the outset, NDA Council Members thanked Congressman Wilson, Congresswoman Spartz, and Mr. Schrage for their leadership on issues of importance for people of Armenia and Diaspora and expressed hope for continued cooperation with the assistance of The Livingston Group, NDA's official representative in Washington.

NDA Governing Council November 21, 2023

The text of the attachment is as follows:

Honorable Amanda Bennett
Chief Executive Officer
US Agency for Global Media
330 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20237

April [...], 2024

Dear Ms. Bennett:

I am writing to bring to your attention to an issue of concern pertaining to the Armenian division of RFE/RL (Azatutyun), which I believe has not been true to RFE/RFL's stated objective of promoting "democratic values and institutions by reporting the news in countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established."

Currently, for the first time in Armenia since 1991, there is a growing pro-Western sentiment in the country, which has culminated with the formation of pro-Western political parties, the largest of which is the National Democratic Alliance (NDA; or Ազգային Ժողովրդավարական Բեւեռ in Armenian). The NDA seeks closer U.S.-Armenia ties and a decoupling of Armenia from the Russian sphere of influence.

In November 2023, I led a Congressional Helsinki Commission delegation along with Congresswoman Victoria Spartz (R-IN), where we as a group met with NDA leaders and prominent political figures Jirayr Sefilian, Ara Papian, and Garo Yeghukian. One of the things we learned during our discussion was that the Armenian division of RFE/RL (Azatutyun) has completely neglected to cover Armenia's pro-Western movement, and NDA specifically. Even worse, during the past year, Azatutyun has displayed an absolutely brazen, open bias against NDA and Armenia's pro-Western movement, repeatedly describing them as "fringe" in repeated news articles. In one egregious episode, Azatutyun extensively covered a public meeting held on November 8, 2021, by Armenia's former president Robert Kocharyan—a close friend and ally of Russia's Vladimir Putin—while making no mention whatsoever of similar public protests being organized by NDA on October 30, 2021, and November 9, 2021. There are several examples like this, which I will refrain from mentioning in interest of time.

Regrettably, instead of supporting Armenia's pro-Western movement, Azatutyun is actively and consistently undermining their work and promoting the activities of pro-Russian operatives. This is both contrary to US interests and values, and particularly outrageous since Azatutyun is being funded by the US taxpayers.

A thorough review of Azatutyun's activities by the US Agency for Global Media I believe is warranted in light of the evidence above. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about this further.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Congressman Joe Wilson
Chairman
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (US Helsinki Commission)