

This is a response to your letter to Secretaries Blinken and Yellen advocating for the imposition of Global Magnitsky Sanctions against officials in the Government of Azerbaijan. The notion that Azerbaijan militarily attacked and blockaded the Garabagh (Karabakh) region is an injustice to international law and the rules-based international order that the United States actively promotes.

Armenia's illegal occupation of the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan is well documented internationally and condemned by the UN Security Council resolutions (822, 853, 874 and 884). Notably, in August 199, late Secretary Madeleine Albright, as the US Ambassador to the UN and Chair of the Security Council condemned the occupation and bombardment of Azerbaijan's territories and demanded withdrawal of Armenia's occupying forces. [1]

Moreover, as the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly resolution 1416 of 2005 finds, Armenia's military action against Azerbaijan "led to large-scale ethnic expulsion and the creation of mono-ethnic areas which resemble the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing."

In light of the following, I would like to request a meeting between you and the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the United States, Khazar Ibrahim, and/or with a delegation from Azerbaijan so we can discuss this in greater detail as we would like for you to be a facilitator for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

[2]For around three decades, the ethnically cleansed Azerbaijani civilians were denied their fundamental right to return to their homes in the occupied Garabagh region and other occupied regions. Azerbaijani residents remaining there were deprived of their basic rights due to Armenia's biased and oppressive policies against them. This situation only benefited a small group. Trying to sustain such an illegal situation through heavy militarization of Armenia created a regional tension point and posed a national security threat to Azerbaijan.

As negotiations proved to be fruitless for the last three decades, no country in the world would tolerate a gross violation of human rights of under a million of its civilians and the infringement of their right to sovereignty on its own soil. This is why Azerbaijan conducted a counter-terrorism operation to disarm and secure the withdrawal of Armenian armed formations of Armenia's armed forces from Azerbaijan's territories. The task was completed within 24 hours with careful and selective application of precision-guided munitions against legitimate military targets and, by all means, avoiding collateral damage to civilians to the maximum degree possible.

According to the testimonies gathered by AFP, "Baku's army generally did not enter towns and villages, confining itself to the strategic heights and roads". [3] As confirmed by the UNHCR, there were "no recorded incidents of mistreatment of civilians".[4]

After removing the main barrier for achieving peace, Azerbaijan's Karabakh region is poised to become a prosperous region where all ethnic and religious groups will peacefully co-exist and prosper. As a multi-ethnic and multi-faith society, Azerbaijan has the willingness, capacity, commitment, and aptitude to ensure the rights and security of its Armenian citizens.

For the first time in 30 years, a United Nations multi-agency team is in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan to assess needs and provide recommendations on best practices for rendering support to Armenian residents. Along with it, there is a historic opportunity to facilitate the normalization and reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The United States can and should play a leading role in this process.

The United States Congress has a standing position of supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States in the former Soviet Union. This is key for security as conflicts in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan showed that foreign-imposed separatism causes human suffering and creates a constant source of instability.

Azerbaijan is the first country to end the chapter of conflict. Hopefully, other cases will follow.

In this context, applying restrictive measures against Azerbaijan will be unjust and unfair. It will also undermine the prospects of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan and damage the United States' role as an arbitrator for peace and restrict the US presence in strategically important Azerbaijan.

In light of this, I would like to request a meeting between you and the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the United States, Khazar Ibrahim, and/or with a delegation from Azerbaijan so we can discuss this in greater detail as we would like for you to be a facilitator for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Respectfully,

Ezra Friedlander

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bE2Xe_yMwRQ

[2] <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17289&lang=en>

[3] <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230930-how-can-we-live-with-them-terrified-armenians-flee-karabakh>

[4] <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/un-refugee-agency-says-it-has-no-reports-of-mistreatment-of-armenians-fleeing-karabakh/3004385>