

# **BREAKING: U.S. State Department Confirms President Trump's Support for Returning Artsakh Refugees**

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U.S. State Department Confirms President Trump's Support for Returning Artsakh Refugees, Releasing Armenian Hostages & Protecting Christian Holy Sites



In a major development following months of grassroots Armenian-American advocacy and bipartisan Congressional engagement, the Trump-Vance Administration has, in an unprecedented move, formally announced its commitment on the following issues regarding Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh): – Supporting the return of Artsakh's displaced ethnic Armenian population to their indigenous homeland – Supporting the release of Armenian hostages illegally held in

Azerbaijan –

Supporting the protection of Armenian Christian heritage sites in Artsakh This announcement was made in a September 25, 2025 letter from the U.S. State Department, signed by Paul D. Guaglianone of the Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs. The letter outlines a newly articulated U.S. policy that directly addresses core priorities long advanced by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Congressional Armenian Caucus. The policy shift comes in response to a powerful bipartisan July 23 letter regarding the return of ethnic Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh and the release of Armenian prisoners, which was spearheaded by 87 Members of Congress, addressed to Secretary of State Marco Rubio and led by Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Brad Sherman (D-CA), and David Valadao (R-CA).

The Congressional letter urged the administration to support the return of Artsakh's forcibly displaced Armenians, press for the release of Armenian prisoners held by Azerbaijan, and ensure the protection of Christian heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh. Details from the Letter In the September 25 letter to Congress, the U.S. State Department outlined a series of key U.S. commitments regarding Artsakh. The letter emphasized that the Administration is: – “Encouraging both Armenia and Azerbaijan to provide for the return of displaced ethnic Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh in the context of a sustainable peace” – “Closely monitoring the trials of Armenian detainees held in Azerbaijan, with U.S. Embassy officials in Baku attending legal proceedings whenever possible” – “Calling on the Azerbaijani government to protect Armenian heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh” The letter contextualized these commitments as part of a broader diplomatic breakthrough—the August 8 summit hosted by President Trump, where Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev reconfirmed their intent to “sign and ratify a peace agreement” that had been agreed to in principle in March 2025. As part of that summit, both sides also committed to establish the “Trump Route for

International Peace and Prosperity”—a corridor that, as the letter notes, “respects Armenia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” while providing Azerbaijan access to its exclave of Nakhichevan.

The State Department described this summit as a “momentous breakthrough” and “an unprecedented opportunity” to secure lasting peace and reconciliation in the region. The letter concluded by underscoring the Department’s commitment to “implementing this historic initiative.” ANCA’s Response: Advocacy in Action In a statement titled “ANCA Welcomes Trump’s Commitment to Returning Artsakh Refugees, Releasing Armenian Hostages, Protecting Christian Holy Sites,” the organization framed the letter as a breakthrough moment in U.S. policy. Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the ANCA, welcomed the administration’s response: “We welcome the commitments undertaken by the Trump-Vance Administration in its response to a bipartisan letter signed by 87 members of the Armenian Caucus, and are already working with our Congressional allies, coalition partners, and community activists to translate these commitments into concrete action.

Our hard-fought progress on each of these fronts – Artsakh refugees, Armenian hostages, and Christian churches – is a tribute to our collective resilience, our enduring resolve in the face of Yerevan’s indifference and Azerbaijan’s intense opposition.” Over the past several months: – Armenian American advocates sent more than 100,000 emails and calls through ANCA’s national, regional, and local platforms urging legislators to co-sign the Armenian Caucus letter – ANCA’s summer interns, Leo Sarkisian and Maral Melkonian Avetisyan, visited over 400 Congressional offices weekly, distributing fact sheets and making the case for a U.S.-backed right of return for Artsakh genocide survivors – These efforts were amplified during ANCA’s September 2025 fly-in Advocacy Days, which brought together activists from across the country The Armenian Caucus Letter: Backing Human Rights & Justice The Trump-Vance Administration’s new stance came in direct response to the bipartisan July 23 letter initiated by the Congressional Armenian Caucus, co-chaired by Frank Pallone, Gus Bilirakis, Brad Sherman, and David Valadao. The letter urged the administration to: – Ensure the collective, protected, and dignified return of forcibly displaced Armenians to their indigenous homeland of Artsakh – Take action consistent with international law and in pursuit of a just and lasting peace – Respond to Azerbaijan’s 2023 blockade and military assault, which displaced 120,000 Christian Armenians – Confront the systematic destruction of Armenian cultural and religious heritage sites, the ransacking of civilian property, and destruction of public infrastructure – Uphold the December 2023 International Court of Justice ruling, which compels Azerbaijan to allow the safe and secure return of Artsakh’s Armenian population The letter stated: “The right of populations displaced by war to return to their homes is a fundamental principle of international law.” Spotlight on the Swiss Peace Initiative The Congressional letter also urged the U.S. to support the Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno-Karabakh—a diplomatic measure adopted by the Swiss Parliament aimed at establishing an international negotiation platform to mediate a safe, secure, and internationally guaranteed return for Armenians. This initiative was a central topic at a standing-room-only Congressional briefing on July 10, attended by over 200 Capitol Hill staffers, policy experts, and human rights advocates.

The event featured Swiss Parliamentarians Erich Vontobel and Lukas Reimann, Dr. John Eibner, President of Christian Solidarity International, Vartan Oskanian, Former Armenian Foreign Minister, Mark Milosch, Republican Staff Director for Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, and was moderated by ANCA Policy Director Alex Galitsky. Full List of

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**Congressional Signatories** The bipartisan letter was co-signed by 87 Members of Congress, spanning both parties and representing dozens of states. Joining Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Brad Sherman (D-CA), and David Valadao (R-CA) in cosigning the letter were Representatives: Gabe Amo (D-RI), Jake Auchincloss (D-MA), Nanette Diaz Barragan (D-CA), Wesley Bell (D-MO), Ami Bera (D-CA), Don Beyer (D-VA), Nikki Budzinski (D-IL), Andre Carson (D-IN), Greg Casar (D-TX), Sean Casten (D-IL), Joaquín Castro (D-TX), Judy Chu (D-CA), Gil Cisneros (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Danny Davis (D-IL), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), Dwight Evans (D-PA), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Charles Fleischmann (R-TN), Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX), Vince Fong (R-CA), Valerie Foushee (D-NC), Lois Frankel (D-FL), Laura Friedman (D-CA), Dan Goldman (D-NY), Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Steven Horsford (D-NV), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Jonathan Jackson (D-IL), Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Young Kim (R-CA), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Nick LaLota (R-NY), Doug LaMalfa (R-CA), John Larson (D-CT), George Latimer (D-NY), Mike Lawler (R-NY), Susie Lee (D-NV), Mike Levin (D-CA), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Seth Magaziner (D-RI), Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Sarah McBride (D-DE), Tom McClintock (R-CA), Betty McCollum (D-MN), James McGovern (D-MA), Rob Menendez (D-NJ), Grace Meng (D-NY), Dave Min (D-CA), Seth Moulton (D-MA), Kevin Mullin (D-CA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), Chris Pappas (D-NH), Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Scott Peters (D-CA), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Delia Ramirez (D-IL), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Luz Rivas (D-CA), Linda Sanchez (D-CA), Janice Schakowsky (D-IL), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Lateefah Simon (D-CA), Haley Stevens (D-MI), Tom Suozzi (D-NY), Eric Swalwell (D-CA), David Taylor (R-OH), Shri Thanedar (D-MI), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Paul Tonko (D-NY), Lori Trahan (D-MA), Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), George Whitesides (D-CA), and Nikema Williams (D-GA). What Comes Next? While the September 25 letter represents a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy toward Artsakh, advocacy organizations and Congressional leaders stress that implementation is key.

ANCA is now mobilizing its national network, engaging policymakers, and working with civil society and diaspora leaders to: – Ensure the administration follows through – Protect Armenian rights on the ground – Hold Azerbaijan accountable for its treatment of Armenian civilians, detainees, and cultural heritage As ANCA made clear: This is a breakthrough—but the real work starts now.