

January 9, 2024

DEMANDING FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF ARMENIAN HOSTAGES HELD CAPTIVE BY AZERBAIJAN

On December 7, 2023, Azerbaijan released 32 prisoners of war (POWs) who were being held captive since 2020 and Armenia released 2 Azerbaijani soldiers held since April, signaling that a peace agreement between the two countries would finally be reached. However, at least 21 Armenian prisoners remain in Azerbaijani custody, with over 80 Armenian soldiers and civilians still missing. The Third Geneva Convention, Article 118, in which Azerbaijan is a signatory, requires the release of POWs and captured civilians upon the cessation of hostilities. Despite Azerbaijan’s international legal obligations and a November 2020 ceasefire agreement, they have not released all detainees and instead continue to detain new POWs, hostages, and captured civilians.

In September 2020, Azerbaijan, with support from Turkey, launched a military assault against the Armenian people of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, also known as Artsakh. In December 2022, Azerbaijan began a blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Artsakh to the world through the Republic of Armenia. This blockade cut off over 120,000 Armenians, including 30,000 children and 20,000 elderlies, from food, medicine, and other critical supplies creating extreme hardship and deaths. Following nearly ten months of an illegal blockade, the Armenians of Artsakh endured a vicious, large-scale assault by the Aliyev regime of Azerbaijan in September 2023, resulting in the forced displacement of more than 100,000 Armenians from Artsakh.

In response to these continuous acts of violence and violations of humanitarian law, Representative Adam Schiff (D-CA) introduced H. Res. 861, calling on Azerbaijan to immediately comply with international commitments regarding the release and treatment of prisoners of war, hostages, and other detained persons. This resolution calls for the implementation of Global Magnitsky sanctions against Azerbaijani officials responsible for abuses against POWs and credible investigations and prosecutions of the perpetrators in these cases. It also calls for the suspension of U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan and full implementation of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act in light of Azerbaijan’s ongoing violations of human rights.

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MOTION

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HORVATH _____

Los Angeles County is home to the greatest number of Armenians outside of Armenia itself and we must continue to stand in solidarity with the Armenian people. This Board has passed several motions condemning Azerbaijan for their aggressions against the Armenian people, including a recent motion in October 2023 demanding the release of Armenian prisoners held by the Azerbaijani government.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office, through the Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch to:

1. Send a five-signature letter to United States President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, urging the Administration to take the following actions:
 - a. Demand Azerbaijan immediately return all Armenian POWs, hostages, and other detained persons,
 - b. Impose Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act violations on Azerbaijan for the illegal detention, torture, and extrajudicial killing of Armenian POWs and hostages, and
 - c. Suspend all United States military and economic assistance to Azerbaijan.
2. Support H. Res. 861, which calls on Azerbaijan to immediately release all prisoners of war and captured civilians, by sending a letter to Congressman Adam Schiff and the Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, with a copy to Los Angeles County's Congressional Delegation, and to advocate for the passage of this resolution.

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