



**ARMENIAN COUNCIL OF AMERICA**  
**TESTIMONY BY SEVAK KHATCHADORIAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF**  
**DIRECTORS**  
**U.S. HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,**  
**DEPARTMENT OF STATE, AND RELATED PROGRAMS**

Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Frankel, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the Armenian Council of America (ACA), I respectfully submit this testimony in support of robust Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations to strengthen the Republic of Armenia's security, address urgent humanitarian needs, and promote a durable and just peace in the South Caucasus. Specifically, we urge the Subcommittee to provide **not less than \$20,000,000 in Foreign Military Financing (FMF), \$10,000,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET), and \$100,000,000 in humanitarian assistance** to support forcibly displaced Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), consistent with the bipartisan requests advanced by the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues.

Founded in 1979, the Armenian Council of America is a non-profit, non-partisan organization uniting community leaders and advocates to advance policies that reflect the values and interests of Armenian Americans while promoting human rights, democracy, and regional stability in the South Caucasus. The ACA works to bridge the Armenian-American community and U.S. policymakers and to advocate for U.S. engagement grounded in international law and the protection of vulnerable populations.

Our request aligns directly with the March 12, 2026 letter led by Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs U.S. Representatives Gus Bilirakis and Frank Pallone, Jr., supported by 46 Members of Congress, which outlines a comprehensive framework for U.S. engagement with Armenia in the FY27 National Security and Related Programs appropriations bill.

### **Strengthening Armenia's Security and Sovereignty**

The Republic of Armenia continues to face credible and ongoing threats to its territorial integrity, including the continued presence of Azerbaijani forces within internationally



recognized Armenian borders. In this context, U.S. security assistance is essential to advancing deterrence and regional stability.

We support the Caucus request that the Subcommittee allocate:

- **Not less than \$20 million in FMF**, and
- Not less than \$10 million in IMET

to strengthen Armenia's defensive capabilities and expand bilateral security cooperation.

These resources will help Armenia address capability gaps, improve interoperability with Western partners, and reinforce its ability to deter aggression consistent with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

### **Addressing the Humanitarian Crisis Following Ethnic Cleansing**

The forced displacement of more than 100,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 followed a prolonged blockade that deprived civilians of food, fuel, and medicine. This sequence of actions has been widely characterized by legal scholars and international observers as constituting ethnic cleansing and raising serious concerns under international humanitarian and human rights law.

We urge the Subcommittee to include **not less than \$100 million in humanitarian assistance** to support displaced Armenians now residing in Armenia.

This funding is necessary to mitigate long-term instability and uphold U.S. commitments to humanitarian protection.

### **Illegal Detention of Armenian Prisoners and Violations of the Geneva Conventions**

Azerbaijan continues to detain **approximately 20 Armenian prisoners of war and civilian detainees**, including political leaders from Nagorno-Karabakh. These detentions raise serious concerns under the **Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions**, which require humane treatment, prohibit coercion, and mandate the prompt repatriation of prisoners of war following the cessation of hostilities.



Credible reporting, including from the U.S. Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, has documented that detainees have been subjected to **“credible allegations of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment”** while in Azerbaijani custody.

In addition, recent prosecutions of Armenian detainees in Azerbaijani courts have been widely criticized as lacking fundamental due process protections. Proceedings have included restricted access to counsel, absence of independent monitoring, and charges inconsistent with international legal standards—conditions that fall short of fair trial guarantees under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**.

The continued detention and prosecution of these individuals not only violates international legal obligations but also undermines confidence in ongoing peace negotiations. **The Armenian Council strongly urges the inclusion of report language calling for the immediate release of all POWs and captive civilians held by Azerbaijan, including Artsakh's leaders who are subject to sham trials.**

**Additionally, the Armenian Council urges that Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act continue to be enforced and that no U.S. taxpayer dollars be used to support Azerbaijan, including any U.S. military or security assistance.**

### **War Crimes and Violations of International Humanitarian Law**

Independent reporting by international human rights organizations has documented acts by Azerbaijani forces that may constitute **war crimes under the Geneva Conventions and customary international law**, including:

- The **extrajudicial killing and abuse of captured Armenian soldiers**
- The **mutilation and degrading treatment of detainees**
- The **targeting and mistreatment of civilians based on ethnicity**

The U.S. Department of State has noted **“significant human rights issues, including unlawful killings, torture, and abuses by security forces”** in connection with the conflict.



Such conduct constitutes grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and requires accountability under international law. **Furthermore, we strongly believe that Congressional consideration of sanctions on Azerbaijan under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act are warranted.**

The failure to address these violations risks entrenching a climate of impunity.

### **Destruction of Armenian Religious and Cultural Heritage**

There is also substantial and credible evidence of the systematic destruction of Armenian religious and cultural heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh. This includes churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and other historically significant landmarks.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has warned that **“the destruction and desecration of Armenian religious sites... threatens the preservation of religious heritage and violates fundamental protections for religious freedom.”**

Such actions may constitute violations of the **1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict**, as well as broader international norms prohibiting the intentional destruction of cultural heritage.

The erasure of cultural and religious identity not only compounds humanitarian harm but also obstructs the safe and dignified return of displaced populations.

### **Ensuring Accountability and Advancing a Just Peace**

A durable peace requires accountability for violations of international law. We therefore support provisions that would:



- Condition U.S. security assistance to Azerbaijan on the **release of detainees, withdrawal from Armenian territory, and compliance with international legal obligations**
- Require evaluation of **Global Magnitsky sanctions** for officials implicated in human rights abuses
- Reinforce that U.S. assistance must align with human rights and rule-of-law standards

### **Oversight of Regional Initiatives**

We also support robust Congressional oversight of regional economic initiatives, including TRIPP, to ensure that U.S. engagement:

- Safeguards Armenia's sovereignty
- Prevents misuse of infrastructure for military purposes
- Aligns with U.S. strategic and human rights objectives

### **Conclusion**

The United States has a clear opportunity in FY27 to advance stability, accountability, and democratic resilience in the South Caucasus. By adopting the funding levels and policy provisions outlined above—and reflected in the bipartisan Armenian Caucus letter supported by 38 Members of Congress—the Subcommittee can play a decisive role in shaping a more secure and just future for the region.

We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to include these provisions in the final FY27 NSRP appropriations bill.

Sevak Khatchadorian  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
Armenian Council of America