

**Member Day Testimony to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Representative Frank Pallone (NJ-06)  
Friday, November 3, 2023**

Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Meeks, thank you for this opportunity to share several of my priorities that are under the jurisdiction of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. As Co-Chair of the Armenia Caucus, I would like to highlight the grave and urgent need for humanitarian assistance for more than 100,000 refugees who were forced to abandon their homeland in response to Azerbaijan's violent military aggression against the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh. I would also like to highlight the need to counter the destabilizing actions of autocrats and support our democratic allies and partners around the world.

**Support for Armenia**

First, I would like to highlight legislation I introduced in September that is under your Committee's jurisdiction, the **Supporting Armenians Against Azerbaijani Aggression Act of 2023 (H.R. 5683)**. Sadly, after I introduced this legislation, Azerbaijan launched a military offensive to ethnically cleanse the area of its native Armenian population that dates back thousands of years. There are aspects of this bill that I believe the Committee should take up. This includes sanctions against the autocratic Azeri regime that rules the country and those responsible for human rights abuses and war crimes. My legislation also includes \$30 million in humanitarian aid, \$10 million in assistance for Armenia through the foreign military financing program at the Department of State, \$650 million in annual assistance to the Armenian energy sector for fiscal years 2024 through 2026, and \$50 million for fiscal years 2024 through 2028 to promote United States-Armenian cooperation on science and technology.

However, given the situation on the ground after the most recent aggression by Azerbaijan, I would recommend the following:

First, given the dire plights of the refugees from Nagorno Karabakh, Congress and the Biden Administration must provide as much humanitarian support as possible. The Armenian government has identified \$1 billion in urgent housing needs for the over 100,000 refugees who were forced to abandon their homeland. These people have lost almost everything, from their basic possessions to their family homes.

Second, these refugees also require assistance with educational, medical, social protection, and other needs, which is estimated to cost \$360 million annually for at least the next two years. Since the United States was unable to stop this humanitarian disaster from unfolding, we must and should do our part to help these refugees during this vulnerable time.

Finally, Congress must repeal the waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act of 1992. This section of my legislation prohibits United States assistance to Azerbaijan until the President determines and notifies Congress that "the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-

Karabakh.” In the wake of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, Congress gave the President the authority to waive Section 907 and issue annual extensions for the provision of assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan if the President determines and certifies that certain criteria are met. For years this extension has been granted and the Aliyev regime has become more emboldened and repressive. Given the continued military assaults on Armenia and the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh, we must take a stand.

### **Fighting Autocrats**

Furthermore, we must work to counter autocrats who have been destabilizing so much of the world. We have rightfully confronted Putin with sanctions and support for Ukraine. There are other autocrats, like Azerbaijan’s Aliyev or Turkey’s Erdogan, who have caused havoc in the lives of ordinary people around the world. These relationships should be examined, especially our relationship with the Republic of Turkey, whose President has declared Putin a friend, has said our SDF partners in the war against ISIS are terrorists, and most recently declared that Hamas, the organization responsible for the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, are not terrorists but in fact freedom fighters. I can find no reason why we should continue to enable and offer military equipment to an autocrat so opposed to our nation’s values.

As a founding member and co-chair of the Armenia Caucus, as well as a committed supporter of democracies around the world, I believe we should send a clear message to our friends and adversaries by taking the measures outlined above. The United States must be a partner to all those who share common values, including upholding democracy, human rights, and the sovereignty of all nations. I look forward to working with the Committee and its members and staff on increasing and sustaining U.S. engagement with fledgling and established democracies.

Thank you for your consideration of my requests.