

The Armenian Assembly of America Urges Members of Congress to Resign From Azeri & Turkish Caucuses in Light of FBI Probe

FBI Raids Congressman's Home and Office as Part of Federal Probe Linked to Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON, D.C., DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, USA, January 21, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The FBI raided Texas Democratic Congressman Henry Cuellar's home and Laredo district office earlier this week as part of a DC-based federal grand jury investigation relating to Azerbaijan and a number of U.S. businessmen, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).



Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX) meets with former Azerbaijan Ambassador to the U.S., Elin Suleymanov, in 2013.

"The Assembly thanks the FBI for its investigation into Azerbaijan's ongoing and surreptitious efforts to unduly influence U.S. policy," stated Assembly Co-Chairs Van Krikorian and Anthony Barsamian. "This kind of corruption enables genocidal policies like the atrocities that occurred in Nagorno-Karabakh during the 2020 44-day war," they continued. "We urge Members to disassociate from the Congressional Azerbaijan and Turkish caucuses," the Co-Chairs added.

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Anthony Barsamian & Van Krikorian

Highlighting its deep concerns regarding the efforts of the Azerbaijan and Turkish authoritarian regimes and their paid agents to whitewash their abysmal human rights record, coupled with their ongoing and undue attempts to influence U.S. policy, the Assembly has [consistently called on](#) Members of Congress to withdraw from the Turkish and Azerbaijan caucuses. The Assembly has [repeatedly called](#)

[for](#) public congressional hearings on Turkey's attempted influence in U.S. democracy, including a

probe into former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn's payments by Turkey that were uncovered by the Department of Justice in 2017.

In addition, the Assembly, in a 2017 letter from Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian to the House Oversight and Government Reform and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, highlighted Azerbaijan's continuous attempts to "undermine western democratic values and institutions," and referenced a BBC article that unveiled a "secret \$3 billion slush fund," resulting in the [Azerbaijani Laundromat scheme](#), published by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).

Azerbaijan's dynastic dictatorship, led by the ruling Aliyev clan, has a long history of bribing foreign officials and diplomats to promote its self-serving foreign policy goals. Based on reports by the Office of Congressional Ethics, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev gave lavish gifts to Members of Congress who traveled to Baku in 2013, on a junket funded by the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR). The Assembly has consistently urged the Department of Justice to investigate these foreign trips illegally funded by Azerbaijan. The corrupt tactics used by Azerbaijan to whitewash its criminal and genocidal actions are so well-known that it has been labeled as "caviar diplomacy." The Assembly has called on the Senate Judiciary Committee to end this unscrupulous practice.

Last Fall, a trove of financial records called the Pandora Papers were released to the public by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). They revealed the wide extent of the Aliyev regime's corruption and the depth of involvement by his family and close associates.

Referred to as the biggest leak of offshore data highlighting the financial secrets of political leaders, the Pandora Papers, through 12 million documents of evidence, uncovered the hidden wealth, tax avoidance, and money laundering schemes used by ruling authorities to conceal funds in offshore accounts.

Particularly, the documents reveal that the Aliyev family has been systematically robbing its own country's wealth since Ilham Aliyev's first term in office in 2003, and that they have, spanning several years, acquired approximately \$700 million worth of real estate in the United Kingdom alone, in addition to registering scores of offshore entities and running a \$2.9 billion money laundering scheme, known as the Azerbaijani Laundromat. It was also specified that the Crown Estate, which owns and manages property on behalf of the Queen of England, bought a £66.5 million (\$91 million) property from the Aliyev family in 2018, in which they made a £31 million (\$42 million) profit.

As an Azerbaijan Caucus Co-Chair, Rep. Cuellar reportedly has regular meetings with Azerbaijan officials, including past and present ambassadors to the U.S., and according to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) reports, he has received thousands of dollars in campaign contributions in 2021 alone from companies with business interests in Azerbaijan, including

political action committees affiliated with Akin Gump, Chevron, Elbit Systems of America, and ExxonMobil.

The Assembly will continue to monitor this developing story and reiterates its call for Members of Congress to resign from the Turkish and Azerbaijan caucuses.

Established in 1972, the Armenian Assembly of America is the largest Washington-based nationwide organization promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues. The Assembly is a non-partisan, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization.

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