

Markey, Whitehouse Lead 27 Senate Democrats Demanding Release of Armenian Hostages

Senate Democratic Leader Schumer Supports Letter Representing 18 States and 160 Million Americans Calling for Magnitsky Sanctions on Azerbaijani Officials

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, November 24, 2025 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- Twenty-seven U.S. Senators, including Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), [have sent a letter](#) to Secretary of State Marco Rubio requesting the Trump Administration demand the immediate and unconditional release of Armenian prisoners of war and political prisoners currently detained by Azerbaijan. The letter, led by Senators Ed Markey (D-MA) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), also requests the administration press for international monitors to access trials in Baku and impose Global Magnitsky sanctions on Azerbaijani officials, according to the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"The fact that twenty-seven Senate Democrats — more than half the caucus, including Leader Chuck Schumer — signed the Markey-Whitehouse letter demanding Azerbaijan's immediate release of Armenian hostages elevates Armenian issues on the U.S. foreign policy agenda — meaningfully raising the bar for Congressional Republicans and the Trump-Vance Administration," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "Just as importantly, it underscores the growing electoral influence of Armenian American voters — reflecting our standing as a well-organized, highly motivated constituency whose support must be earned. The road to victory in 2026 and 2028 — for both parties — runs directly through our communities in key battleground House districts, Senate races, and presidential swing states."

According to the Senate letter, Azerbaijan continues to detain at least 23 Armenian prisoners



captured during and after the 2020 Artsakh War and the 2023 blockade and genocidal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh). Those detained include former presidents, foreign ministers, and parliamentary leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, including Ruben Vardanyan, Davit Manukyan, Davit Babayan, Levon Mnatsakanyan, Arkadi Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan, Arayik Harutyunyan, and Davit Ishkhanyan.

"Reports indicate these political hostages...have suffered abuse and degrading treatment in custody, while secrecy and irregularities surrounding proceedings in Baku's military court cast significant doubt on the fairness and legitimacy of these proceedings," the Senators wrote. "The Azerbaijani government's recent expulsion of the International Committee of the Red Cross — the only organization authorized to visit Armenian detainees — further endangers the safety and security of these Armenian political prisoners."

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The fact that 27 Senate Democrats, including Leader Schumer, signed the Markey letter demanding Azerbaijan's release of Armenian hostages, elevates Armenian issues on the US foreign policy agenda."

*Aram Hamparian, ANCA
Executive Director*

The letter states that "it is now two years since Azerbaijan's blockade and military assault on Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) forcibly displaced the region's 120,000 Christian Armenians in what international legal experts have characterized as ethnic cleansing."

The Senators asked Secretary Rubio to take three specific actions: demand the immediate and unconditional release of all Armenian political prisoners and prisoners of war; press Azerbaijani authorities to allow international observers and independent media outlets to monitor proceedings against Armenian political figures; and impose

sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act on Azerbaijani officials.

"Although we are cautiously hopeful that the recent negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan may usher in a more peaceful future for the region, Azerbaijan's ongoing hostage diplomacy and unreasonable preconditions jeopardize that progress," the Senators wrote. The letter notes that the draft agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan does not include



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IN EQUAL MEASURE, IT DRAMATICALLY UNDERSCORES THE GROWING ELECTORAL INFLUENCE OF ARMENIAN AMERICAN VOTERS - REFLECTING OUR STANDING AS A WELL-ORGANIZED, HIGHLY MOTIVATED CONSTITUENCY WHOSE POLITICAL SUPPORT MUST BE EARNED."

[ANCA.ORG](https://anca.org)

ANCA's Aram Hamparian: Senate letter "elevates Armenian issues on the U.S. foreign policy agenda" and "underscores the growing electoral influence of Armenian American voters"

provisions for releasing Armenian prisoners, and states that "Magnitsky Sanctions remain a critical tool to secure the release of POWs and deter further aggression against Armenia."

The letter warns that "continued U.S. inaction in the face of Azerbaijan's authoritarian aggression is unacceptable and will have grave ramifications for U.S. credibility throughout the region, particularly as Armenia seeks to strengthen its ties with the West."

Joining Senators Markey, Whitehouse and Democratic Leader Schumer in cosigning the September 15, 2025 letter were several committee ranking members and leading voices on

defense and foreign policy issues, including: Senators Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Chris Coons (D-DE), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), John Fetterman (D-PA), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Andy Kim (D-NJ), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Gary Peters (D-MI), Jack Reed (D-RI), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and Peter Welch (D-VT).

The ANCA reports it has been mobilizing nationwide to secure support for the letter through advocacy on Capitol Hill and in Congressional districts. The organization states it is working on a Republican-led initiative to build additional support for accountability measures related to Azerbaijan and the release of detained Armenians.

The Senators concluded their letter by stating: "It is both a moral and strategic imperative for the United States to take bold action to compel Azerbaijan to release unjustly detained Armenian prisoners and ensure regional peace is predicated on accountability, justice, and the fundamental right of return for Nagorno-Karabakh's displaced Armenian population."

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