



Azərbaycan Respublikasının Amerika Birləşmiş Ştatlarındakı Səfirliyi
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United States of America

March 18, 2016

The Honorable Nikki Haley
Governor of the State of South Carolina
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the news reports that there might be attempts to pass resolutions in state legislatures in the United States calling for recognition of the illegal regime established in the occupied Nagorno Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the Nagorno Karabakh region is an internationally recognized integral part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Republic of Azerbaijan was admitted to the United Nations as a sovereign and independent state with the Nagorno-Karabakh region within its borders and the sovereignty; territorial integrity and borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan have been recognized by all members of the international community. In fact, the United States has unequivocally stated on many occasions that it does support territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and does not recognize Nagorno Karabakh as an independent state. It is entirely unrecognized as such even by Armenia.

The illegal entity referred to as “Nagorno Karabakh” was created as a result of occupation and ethnic cleansing. Occupation is not limited to the Nagorno Karabakh region. Seven surrounding districts were occupied by the Armenian Armed Forces as well. As a result, hundreds of thousands of civilian Azerbaijanis were expelled from the Nagorno Karabakh region and surrounding territories of Azerbaijan and for the past 20 years have been internally displaced within their own country.

Four U.N. Security Council resolutions adopted in 1993 reaffirm territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, demand immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied regions. Unfortunately these UN Security Council resolutions remain unfulfilled.

In its judgment as of June 16 2015, the European Court for Human Rights, in contrary to misleading allegations by the Armenian side, found the Republic of Armenia as a responsible party for the occupation of Azerbaijani territories and exercising effective control over the illegal separatist regime in Nagorno-Karabakh region, since the outbreak of the war in Karabakh, – “the

“NKR” [so-called Nagorno-Karabakh republic] and its administration survives by virtue of the military, political, financial and other support given to it by Armenia which, consequently, exercises effective control over Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories”. The Court’s judgment has effectively brought Armenia’s persistent denial of responsibility for unlawful occupation of and military presence in the territories of Azerbaijan to a halt.

Importantly, some so-called representatives of “Nagorno Karabakh”, who engage in misleading public campaigns and pretend to represent a foreign entity, are actually nothing more than a private lobbying group. I don’t rule out that they might indulge in provocation to attempt to pass a resolution in your state legislature disrespectful of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. By illegally and unduly involving a state legislature in the realm of federal foreign policy making, they might aim to distract the attention of the broad American public from the continued occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan by the Armenian Armed Forces, accompanied by gross violation of human rights of hundreds of thousands of the Azerbaijani IDPs. Their ultimate goal is to consolidate the occupation of these territories and to prevent return of the displaced Azerbaijani population to their homes and properties from which they were forcibly expelled.

The United States and Azerbaijan are close strategic partners. Azerbaijan provides multi-faceted support for U.S. operations in Afghanistan as it previously did in Iraq and Kosovo. Our two countries cooperate on counterterrorism and nonproliferation issues. Moreover, Azerbaijan greatly contributes to the energy security of the United States and Europe. We always appreciate that our strategic partner – the United States supports our territorial integrity. This support has always served as glue to further cement our partnership. Our partnership tremendously benefits the people of America and Azerbaijan. Allowing adoption of such resolutions in respectful legislative chambers contradicts the spirit of the strong U.S.- Azerbaijan partnership and aims to damage this partnership.

Against this background, I would like to urge you to exercise a caution against any possible attempt to use a state legislature in your state to pass a resolution which would cast a shadow on the successful US-Azerbaijan partnership.

Please feel free to contact the Embassy should you have any question on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'E' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish at the end.

Elin Suleymanov,

Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan