

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 1, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

Amid increasing violence in the south Caucasus, we are writing to request that you directly engage with leaders in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia to encourage an immediate cease-fire and a return to the negotiating table.

From public reporting on the scale of Azerbaijan's initial attacks over the weekend, it is clear that its military action was planned and premeditated aggression. Given the possibility that this conflict could engulf the region and draw in other external actors, it is imperative that the U.S. use its diplomatic leverage to bring about an immediate cease fire. We appreciate the engagement by National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien, Deputy Secretary Stephen Biegun, and Minsk Group Co-Chair Andrew Schofer, but the circumstances call for more senior-level U.S. engagement before the conflict escalates further.

Turkey has clearly decided to play a more assertive – and dangerous – role in the region. Its unconditional support for Azerbaijan's action is a significant escalation and yet another disturbing example of Turkey's aggressive behavior beyond its borders. From Libya to Syria and in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey has made its intentions clear: it does not seek to be a constructive player on the world stage.

In light of these circumstances, we urge you to take the following steps:

First, the U.S. should work to reinvigorate the Minsk Group and offer to host a meeting of its members in the United States. In 2001, the United States hosted the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Key West, Florida for talks that served to diffuse tensions at the time. It is time for another summit, and we urge you to use your power of convocation to seek a peaceful outcome.

Second, the U.S. must immediately suspend all security assistance to Azerbaijan. We have been very critical of U.S. security assistance to Azerbaijan given the country's human rights record and aggression in the region. Earlier this year, at Senator Menendez's request, the Government Accountability Office agreed to conduct a review of security assistance to the country to ensure that it aligns with U.S. interests; this violence indicates that it does not.

Third, President Trump must convince Turkey to immediately disengage from the conflict. President Trump has repeatedly touted his close personal relationship with President Erdogan.

While we believe that his faith in President Erdogan is misguided, this conflict provides an opportunity to secure an outcome with Turkey that is actually in the interests of the United States. If Turkey is unwilling to step back from active engagement in the conflict, then the State Department should immediately suspend all sales and transfers of military equipment to Ankara.

The United States has always played an essential leadership role in easing tensions in many conflicts around the world and preventing escalation into full-scale war. Despite the many events competing for our attention, including our presidential election, this situation requires U.S. leadership. We urge you to fully engage and use the power of your office to bring about a peaceful resolution to this terrible violence and get the parties back to the table as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



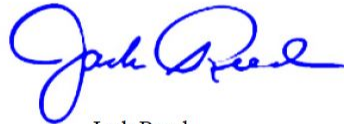
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator