



October 21, 2020

Philip T. Reeker
Acting Assistant Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: Request for Secretary Pompeo to use October 23rd meetings to urge Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan to protect human rights in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Reeker:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA and our members across the United States, I write to urge you and Secretary Pompeo to use the October 23rd, 2020 meeting with the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan to press both parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, including by stopping the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects (such as artillery and rockets) in civilian areas.

On September 27, Armenian and Azerbaijani armed forces exchanged fire along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh. That conflict remains ongoing, despite multiple humanitarian ceasefires. Since the start of the clashes, both sides have accused one another of war crimes and causing civilian casualties around the line of contact and well beyond it. Amnesty International researchers have confirmed evidence strongly suggesting the [use of cluster munitions](#) by the forces of Azerbaijan in Stepanakert. Our researchers were able to trace the location of the explosion to a residential area and identify the munition used as an Israeli-made M095 DPICM cluster munition. Amnesty has also noted evidence strongly suggesting the Armenian military's use of a 300 millimeter Smerch rocket artillery system, and the use of Scud missiles, including likely in the attacks that caused destruction in civilian area of the Azerbaijani city of Ganja. [According to media reports](#), at least 12 people were killed in a 17 October attack that destroyed a row of civilian homes in Ganja. Both sides, [according to the evidence we have seen](#), have deployed explosive weapons with wide area effects in ways which have severely affected civilian areas, which has tallied with the two sides' reports of civilian casualties.

While Amnesty International does not take sides in this or any conflict, we are [gravely concerned](#) by the ongoing use of heavy weaponry by both parties in areas populated by civilians. Moreover, we object in the strongest terms to the use of cluster munitions. There are now 110 states that are party to the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, which bans the production, transfer, stockpiling and use of cluster bombs. As documented by Amnesty International and other human rights monitors in various conflicts including [Syria](#), [Yemen](#), [Egypt](#), [Lebanon](#), and elsewhere, the use of cluster bombs pose a significant hazard to civilians, particularly children, who may be maimed or killed by these weapons long after their



initial deployment. While the U.S. is not state party to the 2008 convention, policy makers are clearly aware of the danger to civilians posed by these munitions. Indeed, U.S. armed forces [have refrained from deploying the weapon](#) since the onset of the war in Iraq, with a single exception in Yemen in 2009.

Separately, Amnesty International has [documented reports](#) that Government of Azerbaijan has restricted internet access and detained critics of its military campaign such as Giyas Ibrahimov, a peaceful activist who expressed anti-war views. No government should use armed conflict as a pretext for silencing dissent or limiting people's access to information.

We urge you and Secretary Pompeo to use the upcoming meetings with Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan to:

- Call on both parties to the conflict to take concrete and immediate steps to ensure civilians are not harmed during hostilities;
- Advocate for the immediate cessation of cluster bomb use;
- Urge both parties to refrain from using explosive weapons with wide area effects in civilian areas; and
- Ensure that parties to the conflict live up to their obligations under international human rights law and not use the conflict as a pretext for the arbitrary restriction on rights.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 893-6302 or dbalson@aiusa.org.

Sincerely,

Daniel Balson
Advocacy Director, Europe & Central Asia
Amnesty International USA