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January 25, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
United States Department of State

Dear Secretary Kerry:

I write to express my serious concerns over a resolution which will be considered in the near future by the Parliamentary Assembly in the Council of Europe (PACE) regarding the recent escalation of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. I understand that the resolution, entitled "Escalation of Violence in Nagorno Karabakh" will be voted on as soon as January 26th.

I would request that in the short time left before the resolution is voted upon, the State Department make clear at the highest levels its view that the resolution is one-sided, inaccurate, and counterproductive to the cause of peace and stability. The language of the resolution betrays a clear pro-Azerbaijan bias, accepting at face value their narrative of the conflict. This is deeply concerning, particularly as Azerbaijan has recently taken numerous provocative actions on the Line of Contact resulting in the death and injury of civilians and military personnel. Further, though the PACE resolution makes no mention of it, Azerbaijan continues to reject the installation of technologies along the Line of Contact to monitor the use of snipers and artillery. I am deeply concerned that the passage of this resolution by PACE will embolden Azerbaijan to act more aggressively, risking a wider conflict.

I understand and appreciate that the Department has expressed its opposition to this ill-considered resolution. I am also appreciative of a joint statement issued by the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group making clear that the OSCE process is the sole forum for resolving the conflict and that any statement to the contrary by PACE is unhelpful. Nonetheless, as the vote approaches, I urge the Department to engage at the highest levels to express the view that the passage of the resolution by PACE would destabilize an already volatile situation on the Line of Contact.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam B. Schiff".

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress