



SOCIETY FOR ORPHANED ARMENIAN RELIEF (SOAR)

Buenos Aires Chapter

Luciana Minassian, Buenos Aires Chapter President & Attorney at Law

Buenos Aires, 17 March 2026

Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger

President

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

19 Avenue de la Paix

CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Re: Urgent Appeal — Restoration of Humanitarian Access to Armenian Prisoners Detained in Azerbaijan

Dear President Spoljaric Egger,

Buenos Aires Chapter of Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief writes to you on behalf of the Armenian prisoners currently detained in Azerbaijan, including Mr. Ruben Vardanyan, to urgently appeal to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to use its good offices and expertise to restore meaningful humanitarian access to these individuals. We do so in full recognition of the ICRC's unique mandate, its principled neutrality, and its singular capacity to act as an impartial humanitarian intermediary in situations such as this.

I. The Current Situation

On 13 March 2026, during a brief telephone call with his family — one of the only remaining channels of communication available to him — Mr. Vardanyan attempted to reach Azerbaijan's Ombudsperson, Ms. Sabina Aliyeva. This came after ten consecutive days of unsuccessful contact attempts by his legal counsel through written requests and official telephone calls. The call was terminated before Mr. Vardanyan could complete his appeal, leaving him without any effective channel to raise concerns about his situation.

More than a month following the conclusion of their respective trials, neither Mr. Vardanyan nor, to our knowledge, the other Armenian prisoners have received the

official texts of their verdicts in any language — including Russian, Armenian, or Azerbaijani. They remain unaware of the precise charges under which they were convicted and have not been informed of where or when they will be transferred to serve their sentences.

The physical condition of several prisoners is a cause for serious concern. Those released and returned to Armenia on 14 January 2026 arrived in a state that speaks to the difficult conditions of their detention. We are deeply worried about the welfare of those who remain in Azerbaijani custody.

II. A Vacuum of Humanitarian Protection

The departure of the ICRC from Azerbaijan has left these prisoners without any meaningful institutional safeguard. Independent human rights monitoring mechanisms within the country have been progressively dismantled, and no functioning international body is currently able to verify conditions of detention, ensure access to legal counsel, or facilitate communication with families.

Families now rely solely on rare and brief telephone calls as the last fragile link to their loved ones. There are growing fears that even this minimal form of contact may soon be suspended entirely. The uncertainty, lack of information, and absence of oversight create conditions deeply incompatible with the basic standards of humane treatment expected under international humanitarian law.

III. Our Appeal

Soar respectfully appeals to the ICRC to take all steps within its mandate and capacity to restore humanitarian access to the Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan. Specifically, we appeal for the ICRC to:

- Re-engage with Azerbaijani authorities through confidential dialogue to restore ICRC access to the places of detention where Armenian prisoners are held;
- Work to ensure that prisoners are provided with the official texts of their verdicts and informed of the charges against them, in a language they understand, in line with basic standards of humane treatment;
- Seek to facilitate and protect regular family contact, including telephone access, as a fundamental humanitarian safeguard;
- Take steps to monitor the physical and psychological conditions of detainees, with particular attention to those whose health was already visibly compromised at the time of their return to Armenia in January 2026, and the ones that still remain in Azerbaijan since 2020 and 2023.

We also draw attention to the broader international context. Recent frameworks discussed in 2025 — including the Phase 1 agreement in the Israeli-Palestinian context and draft proposals for Ukraine addressing the exchange of prisoners of war, civilians, and the return of displaced children reflect a renewed international consensus on the

primacy of humanitarian safeguards in conflict and post-conflict situations. We urge the ICRC to draw upon this momentum in its engagement with all relevant parties.

The rights and dignity of these prisoners must not be allowed to fall into silence. Soar stands ready to cooperate with the ICRC and to provide any information that may assist in its efforts. We place our full confidence in the ICRC's ability to act, as it has done across generations of conflict, as the indispensable guardian of humanitarian principles.

We thank you sincerely for your attention to this urgent matter and for the ICRC's continued commitment to humanity. We await your response with hope.

Respectfully yours,



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