

OPEN LETTER FROM THE BARONESS COX OF QUEENSBURY CONCERNING THE FORTHCOMING ARMENIA-EUROPEAN UNION SUMMIT

Dear friends, colleagues, and all with an interest in Armenia,

In my public statement, dated 5th February 2025, I announced that I would be reducing some of my activities, but that I planned to continue to engage with causes to which I remain deeply committed. As a consistent supporter of Armenia since 1988 and having visited Armenia and Artsakh more than 70 times, it will be obvious that the Republic of Armenia, whose people I love so dearly, remains very close to my heart. I remain equally committed, with an outpouring of love and support, to the people of Artsakh whose history, faith, suffering, and endurance remain inextricably linked to the wider history and lived experience of Armenia.

I welcome the fact that relations between Armenia and the European Union have progressed to the stage which allows the first Armenia-European Union summit to take place in Yerevan on 4th and 5th May 2026. However, I remain deeply concerned about two issues, and I therefore feel compelled to write this letter in the spirit of St Paul who calls upon each of us to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). It seems to me that it is important to ensure, when we look to the future, that we do not forget the past. Of greater importance still is that we should never attempt to erase that past or somehow choose or encourage others to forget all that we know history has taught us. We

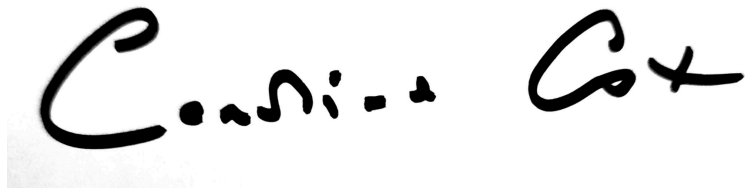
must always remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice or suffered injury and loss or imprisonment whilst that history was being created.

My first concern is that of the hostage prisoners and Prisoners of War from Armenia and Artsakh who, to this day, remain in captivity in Azerbaijan. It is reported that many are still being treated in a manner which offends the European Union's own laws and stipulations concerning the treatment of those in captivity, and the right to a fair trial. I cannot see that such issues can be put to one side by anyone who wishes, as I do, for a just and lasting peace. It has often been said that "there can be no peace without justice" and it is my hope that those words are kept clearly in mind by all those who are involved in shaping Armenia's future. I repeat that the past cannot simply be ignored or erased. It must be addressed. I respectfully call upon the government and people of Armenia, together with all interested partners, to ensure that this approach is given priority in a meaningful and purposeful manner until all hostage prisoners and PoWs of Armenia and Artsakh have been released. The shared goals of lasting justice and peace and greater co-operation surely demand that the EU also give this issue their highest priority.

My second concern relates to the ongoing tensions in Church/State relations in Armenia. It is a source of great pain and sadness to me that Armenia, as the first country to adopt Christianity as its official state religion widely thought to be in 301AD, should find itself in the current situation. Inspired by the example of St Gregory the Illuminator, the founder and first head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, I pray that all those concerned should work together to ensure freedom of religion or belief in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I humbly call upon the European Union to ensure that, in any engagement with any third country and as they have committed to do, it requests and requires of those concerned that they abide by the relevant U.N. resolutions and the relevant EU rules and stipulations concerning freedom of religion or belief including EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief adopted by the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 24 June 2013. Equal attention must be

given to the protection of religious sites and antiquities currently suffering destruction in Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh.

I pray that God shall continue to love, bless, and protect the people of Armenia and Artsakh.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cornelia Cox". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C' and a stylized 'X' at the end.