

The Honorable Mirjana Spoljaric Egger
President
International Committee of the Red Cross
19 Avenue de la Paix
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

7 July 2026

Dear President Spoljaric Egger,

As the wife of Ruben Vardanyan, one of the 19 Armenian detainees currently held in Azerbaijan, I am addressing you in this public letter in connection with a humanitarian initiative. You will perhaps recall our earlier correspondence.

My deep respect goes to the International Committee of the Red Cross and to its essential work in protecting human dignity, humanitarian access, and family connection for people deprived of liberty.

The difficult circumstances in which the ICRC has had to operate are not lost on me, including the closure of its delegation in Baku in September 2025. Since then, the families of Armenian detainees held in Azerbaijan have been left without regular, independent, and internationally recognized humanitarian access to their relatives. This remains a serious humanitarian concern.

My plan is to travel to Baku in September 2026 as part of an international women's humanitarian delegation. Its purpose would be strictly humanitarian: to seek access to all Armenian detainees held at the Umbaki Penitentiary Complex, and to deliver letters, photographs and permitted personal items from their loved ones. Practical humanitarian questions are also something I would like to discuss: correspondence between the detainees and their families, conditions of detention, and the possibility of regular and independent monitoring.

A letter has already gone to the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of Azerbaijan, requesting this visit be facilitated under her official auspices and with the necessary assurances regarding the safety of the members of the delegation.

This letter now asks whether the ICRC may be able to provide assistance, advice, or engagement in relation to this initiative, in any form that you may consider possible and appropriate within your humanitarian mandate.

Deep gratitude would follow if the ICRC could designate a representative to accompany the delegation in a humanitarian observer capacity. If direct participation is not possible, any guidance on how such a visit should be structured, and how it might contribute to the broader need for regular and independent humanitarian access, would be welcome.

This visit will mean a great deal to those held in detention and to their families, who have lived for years with uncertainty and without regular, independent information about their loved ones.

Knowing who within your organization would be best placed to assist with this initiative would be appreciated. The proposed composition of the delegation, the list of items we hope to deliver, and any other relevant details are all ready to be shared.

With deep respect and hope,
Veronika Zonabend