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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Written Testimony of Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib
House Committee on Appropriations
June 22, 2020

Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, distinguished Members of the Committee:

First and foremost, allow me to thank you and your staffs for your hard work during this uniquely challenging appropriations season. I would like to urge support for the life-saving humanitarian demining program managed by USAID in Nagorno Karabakh. Without continued support in the FY21 budget, this program, responsible for providing the only humanitarian demining assistance in Karabakh, will be forced to close.

Karabakh has experienced one of the world's highest mine-accident rates, with per capita casualty rates, at times, at levels comparable those of Iraq or Cambodia. A quarter of these casualties have been children. Unfortunately, significant landmine contamination in Karabakh continues to threaten innocent civilians.

USAID's demining program has been responsible for destroying nearly 61,000 landmines and explosive hazards and has transformed over 33,000 acres of former minefield and battlefield into land available for productive use and recreation. Furthermore, every child that has attended school in Karabakh since 2003 has received lifesaving mine risk education.

Despite this progress, USAID support for this program has expired, and no future funding is planned. **The U.S. is the only government donor to this program, and without funding in the FY21 budget, this program will shut down.** Given that USAID provides the only demining aid in the region, the closure of this program will doom families to live near minefields indefinitely.

To promote peace and security in this region, I respectfully urge the committee to include the following provisions in the foreign aid bill:

- **Of the funds appropriated by the Act, not less than \$1.5 million shall be made available to fund demining and landmine risk education programs in Nagorno Karabakh.**

- **We further request that the committee provide robust funding for Nagorno Karabakh based regional rehabilitation services for survivors of landmine injuries and individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rashida Tlaib". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent dot over the 'i' in "Tlaib".

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress