May 4, 2018

His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdogan
President
The Republic of Turkey

Dear Mr. President,

It has now been over a year and a half since Turkish authorities detained Pastor Andrew Brunson, a law-abiding American citizen resident in Turkey since 1993, for alleged involvement in terrorism.

Pastor Brunson’s detention and formal arrest followed the Turkish government’s imposition of a State of Emergency after a violent coup attempt in July 2016 rightly opposed by Turks across the political spectrum. The United States has condemned the coup and respects the legitimate efforts of the Turkish government to ensure its perpetrators face justice and the Turkish nation is protected from any repetition of the coup attempt. The Congress supports the ongoing efforts to strengthen law enforcement cooperation between U.S. agencies and their Turkish counterparts, including with regard to investigating alleged participants in the coup plot.

However, we are deeply disturbed that the Turkish government has gone beyond legitimate action against the coup plotters to undermine Turkey’s own rule of law and democratic traditions. Under the State of Emergency, tens of thousands of Turkey’s own citizens as well as some citizens of the United States and other countries have been arrested, dismissed from employment or otherwise seen their lives destroyed on vague charges and dubious evidence. These actions by the government of Turkey are inconsistent with the commitment to law and justice that have historically been hallmarks of Turkish democracy.

That the Turkish government has consistently ignored bipartisan expressions of concern from the Congress has also been cause for concern. Nonetheless, we chose to respect the working of the Turkish judicial system and await a just outcome.

On March 13, 2018, Turkish authorities issued an indictment alleging and purportedly detailing Pastor Brunson’s offenses. It is an absurd collection of anonymous accusations, flights of fantasy, and random character assassination. It is an insult not only to an unjustly imprisoned individual, but to the traditions of Turkish jurisprudence. That a Turkish court could accept such a document as the basis for prosecution removes any shred of doubt that Andrew Brunson, as well as other American citizens and Turkish employees of the U.S. Government detained under the State of Emergency, is being used as a political pawn by elements of the Turkish government bent on destroying the longstanding partnership between two great nations. Moreover, the suggestion in the indictment that the actions of Pastor Brunson, to explain his religious
convictions to others, were somehow meant to undermine the Turkish state brings a new and deeply disturbing dimension to the case. It should trouble all Turks justly proud of Turkey's centuries-old tradition of welcoming believers of all faiths.

The United States Government, and millions of Americans deeply concerned by the Brunson case, have been patient, in the hope that justice would be done and Pastor Brunson would be reunited with his family. The signatories of this letter have concluded that other measures will be necessary to ensure that the Government of Turkey respects the right of law-abiding citizens and employees of the United States to travel to, reside in, and work in Turkey without fear of persecution.

Sincerely,

Patrick McHenry
Member of Congress

David E. Price
Member of Congress

Mark Walker
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Edward R. Royce
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Richard Hudson
Member of Congress

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

George Holding
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams
Member of Congress
Ted Budd  
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

Virginia Foxx  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

Mark Meadows  
Member of Congress

Wm. Lacy Clay  
Member of Congress

Robert Pittenger  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

David Rouzer  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress

Steve Scalise, Majority Whip  
Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress
Bill Johnson
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Mike Bishop
Member of Congress

Gregory Meeks
Member of Congress

M.C.

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

Ken Buck
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Liz Cheney
Member of Congress

Chris H. Smith
Member of Congress

Jacky Rosen
Member of Congress
Chris Stewart  
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress

Ralph Abraham, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Paul Cook  
Member of Congress

Kevin Cramer  
Member of Congress

Rick Crawford  
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

David Scott  
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress

Warren Davidson  
Member of Congress

Albio Sires  
Member of Congress
Rodney Davis  
Member of Congress

Ron DeSantis  
Member of Congress

Scott DesJarlais, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Jeff Duncan  
Member of Congress

Tom Emmer  
Member of Congress

Evan Jenkins  
Member of Congress

Bill Flores  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress

Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

Chuck Fleischmann  
Member of Congress

Matt Gaetz  
Member of Congress
Garret Graves  
Member of Congress

Louie Gohmert  
Member of Congress

Kay Granger  
Member of Congress

Bob Goodlatte  
Member of Congress

Glenn Grothman  
Member of Congress

Brett Guthrie  
Member of Congress

Gregg Harper  
Member of Congress

Andy Harris, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Vicky Hartzerler  
Member of Congress

Jeb Hensarling  
Member of Congress

Jody Hice  
Member of Congress

French Hill  
Member of Congress

Bill Huizenga  
Member of Congress
Steve King
Member of Congress

Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress

Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress

Scott Tipton
Member of Congress

Tom Graves
Member of Congress

Dave Trott
Member of Congress

Tim Walberg
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress

Daniel Webster
Member of Congress

Brad Wenstrup
Member of Congress

Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress

Roger Williams
Member of Congress

Rob Woodall
Member of Congress

Kevin Yoder
Member of Congress
Ted Yoho, DVM
Member of Congress

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter
Member of Congress

Dave Brat
Member of Congress