

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 7, 2025

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

Following reports¹ about your recent phone call with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, we write to you regarding the U.S.-Turkey bilateral relationship, Eastern Mediterranean security, and regional stability. Specifically, we urge you to bring up various topics of concern to us in a forthcoming meeting with the Turkish President. These include Turkey's aspirations for F-35 fighter jets; territorial integrity and sovereignty with respect to Greece, Cyprus, and Israel; Erdoğan's personal alliance with Islamist terror groups like Hamas; and respect for political opposition and human rights within Turkey.

For years, President Erdoğan has antagonized Turkey's neighbors, including fellow NATO allies, by violating Greek sovereign airspace, illegally occupying parts of the Republic of Cyprus, harassing ships in the Aegean Sea, and threatening to invade Greece and Israel. Despite the overall easing of tensions between Greece and Turkey, we are particularly troubled by the sudden uptick in violations of Greek air space with U.S.-provided F-16 jets in Ankara's possession, and the violations of Greece's territorial waters which have occurred throughout the last year. This behavior is unacceptable for a NATO ally and poses a continuous threat to the security of a vital European partner. Against this backdrop, a delicate balance in the region would be upended if Turkey were to rejoin the F-35 program.²

Furthermore, Turkey has adopted policies that support NATO adversaries like Russia. This posture is most clearly demonstrated by Erdoğan's 2019 purchase of Russia's S-400 missile defense system which he retains to this day. This decision triggered Ankara's removal from the F-35 program and the imposition of sanctions, pursuant to the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). The presence of Russian technology within NATO is both a security and cyber threat to the entire alliance as S-400s are wholly incompatible with NATO and U.S. technology, including F-35s. Accordingly, Congress disapproved of Erdoğan's decision and passed legislation in 2019 that prevented the transfer of any F-35 aircraft or support equipment or parts to Turkey, as well as any intellectual property, technical data, or material support necessary for the maintenance of F-35 aircraft.³

President Erdoğan has also adopted the troubling revisionist policy dubbed "Blue Homeland."⁴ This serves as his political and military justification for dominating the Eastern Mediterranean at the expense of other regional powers. Under the auspices of "Blue Homeland," Turkish vessels are

¹ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), "I just had a very good and productive telephone conversation with the President of Turkey, Recep Erdoğan, concerning many subjects..." Truth Social, May 5, 2025, 11:10AM, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114455860282159313>.

² Michael Makovsky, PhD, et. al., "Flight Risk: Turkey and the F-35," *The Jewish Institute for National Security of America*, April 30, 2025, <https://jinsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Flight-Risk-Turkey-and-the-F-35.pdf>.

³ *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020*, S. 1790, 116th Congress, 1st Session, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1790/text>.

⁴ Ryan Gingeras, "Blue Homeland: The Heated Politics Behind Turkey's New Maritime Strategy," *War on the Rocks*, June 2, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/blue-homeland-the-heated-politics-behind-turkeys-new-maritime-strategy/>.

challenging Greek and Cypriot exclusive economic zones at a worrying rate; Erdoğan is claiming natural gas deposits off the coast of Cyprus; and he even signed a Memorandum with Libya's provisional government in Tripoli which infringes upon the sovereign rights of Greece and Cyprus. This policy flouts international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and furthers Erdoğan's aims of regional dominance and his neo-Ottoman goals.

Since October 7, 2023, when hundreds of Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and carried out a gruesome attack on innocent civilians, leaders from around the world have forcefully condemned the attack and called on Hamas to release hostages and lay down its weapons. One leader, however, did not. Erdoğan instead said that, "Hamas is not a terrorist organization; it is a liberation group." Since then, Erdoğan has acted as the chief patron of Hamas. He has allowed Turkey to serve as the hub of the terror group's global finances; equated the actions of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with those of Hitler, most notable at the United Nations General Assembly's High-Level Week in September 2024; announced an end to all trade with Israel; stonewalled any potential NATO cooperation with Israel; and even threatened to invade Israel.

At the same time, Erdoğan has sought closer personal and political ties with Hamas's senior leadership. He has offered safe-haven to Hamas terrorists like Ismail Haniyeh, Khaled Meshaal, and Saleh al-Arouri; declared a day of mourning in Turkey following the death of Ismail Haniyeh and ordered the flags at the Turkish Embassy in Tel Aviv to be lowered to half-mast in Haniyeh's honor; and gave a platform to Khaled Meshaal, a U.S. Department of Justice-designated terrorist, to call for Palestinians to carry out suicide bombings against Israelis while speaking at a conference in Istanbul.

President Erdoğan also continues to wrongfully and illegally occupy the Republic of Cyprus. Fifty-one years ago, Turkey invaded Cyprus and embarked on a gruesome campaign to ethnically cleanse parts of the island, destroy religious landmarks, and kidnap and disappear Greek Cypriots living there. Since then, the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," which occupies about one-third of the island's territory, has been deemed illegal by numerous successive UN Security Council Resolutions, and Turkey has been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights for its various crimes against humanity perpetrated in Cyprus.⁵

Finally, there has recently been a significant crackdown on political opposition within Turkey. President Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party have become increasingly authoritarian in recent years by consolidating power through constitutional changes and imprisonment of opponents and critics. While Erdoğan routinely rejects adherence to human rights norms or respect for political opposition within this purported democracy, the arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul on March 19, 2025, shows a sudden move to further consolidate his power in Turkey. Within the past month, Erdoğan has raided the homes of 106 of his political rivals, banned protests, and used the police to violently suppress any public dissent.⁶ Baseless investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of human rights defenders, journalists, opposition politicians and others are hallmarks of society in Turkey. Anti-terror and disinformation laws have been used to curtail freedom of expression; freedom of peaceful assembly has been unlawfully restricted; distribution of aid after the February 2023 earthquakes failed to adequately address the rights and needs of people with disabilities; and violence against women and girls remains widespread.

Therefore, Mr. President, in anticipation of your reported meeting with President Erdoğan, we respectfully urge you to bring up the following topics in your discussions:

⁵ Cyprus v. Turkey, Application no. 25781/94, May 12, 2014, [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%22itemid%22:\[%22001-144151%22\]](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%22itemid%22:[%22001-144151%22]).

⁶ Elçin Poyrazlar, "Erdoğan's Main Rival Arrested in Major Clampdown on Turkish Opposition," *Politico*, March 19, 2025, <https://www.politico.eu/article/tayyip-erdogan-main-rival-arrested-major-clampdown-turkish-opposition-ekrem-imamoglu/>.

1. Turkey's use of U.S.-provided F-16s to routinely incur upon Greek sovereign airspace and the impossibility of Turkey's readmittance into the F-35 program while Ankara retains the S-400 missile defense system and continues these destabilizing actions;
2. Erdoğan's adoption of revisionist policies that are beneficial to Russia at the expense of NATO cohesion and security;
3. Erdoğan's problematic "Blue Homeland" policy and the danger it poses to Greek and Cypriot sovereignty and the integrity of their territorial waters and maritime zones, undermining the overall peace and stability of the Eastern Mediterranean;
4. The personal and political ties Erdoğan maintains with senior Hamas leaders and the sympathy he demonstrates toward Hamas's goals of eliminating the State of Israel;
5. The antisemitic and anti-Zionist rhetoric Erdoğan habitually spews;
6. The continued illegal occupation of Cyprus; and
7. Respect for human rights and political opposition within an alleged democracy like Turkey.

It is in the interests of the United States for Turkey to be a strong, reliable ally within NATO. As a government that spends the required two percent of GDP on defense in a turbulent and dynamic region, Turkey could serve as a force multiplier for the U.S. and our allies. Erdoğan, however, has shown that his personal and political agenda does not align with U.S. interests and values. In addition to the concerns outlined above, he has also expressed his desire to join BRICS, seek status within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, support Islamist groups in Syria, annihilate the Kurds, facilitate genocide in Sudan, and boost Russian nuclear industries.

Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to urge greater respect for international law as well as the rule of law within his own country. Doing so would strengthen NATO, strengthen our partnerships with countries like Greece and Cyprus, further guarantee Israel's security, and promote global security.

Thank you for your attention to this increasingly concerning matter.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs
Committee



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
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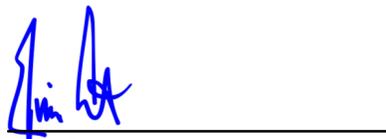
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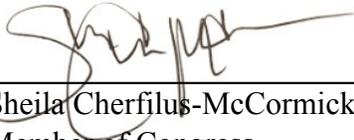
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