

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 20, 2018

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan
President
The Republic of Turkey

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 Senate 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 13th, 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, like other American citizens as well as 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 was 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,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Bob Corker
United States Senator



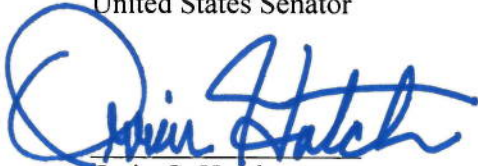
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



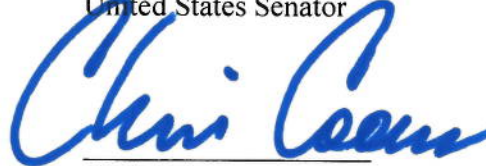
Richard Burr
United States Senator



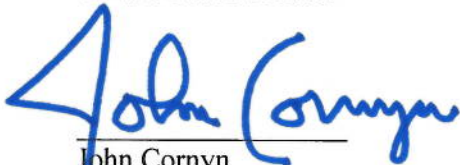
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



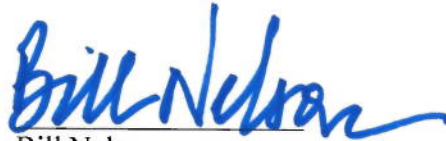
John Cornyn
United States Senator



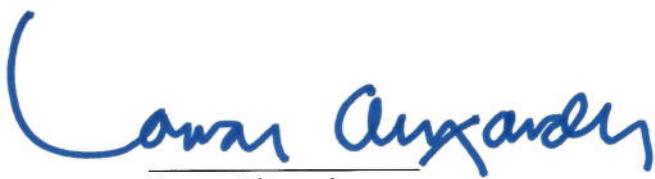
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



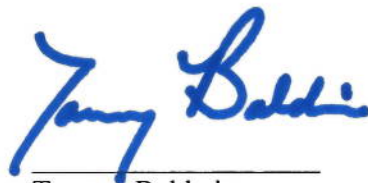
Chuck Grassley
United States Senator



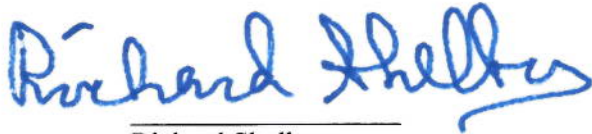
Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Lamar Alexander
United States Senator



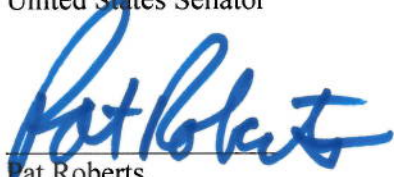
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



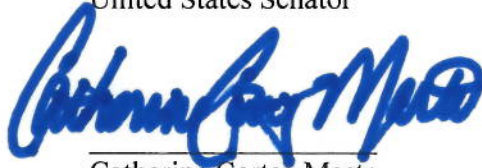
Richard Shelby
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Pat Roberts
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



John Thune
United States Senator



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator



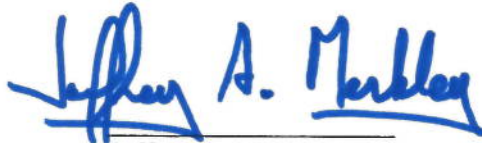
James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Johnny Isakson
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



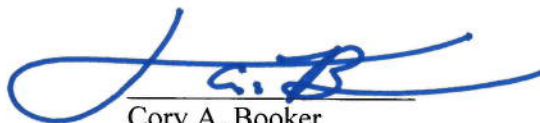
James Lankford
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



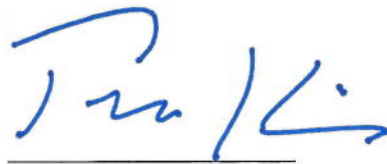
Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



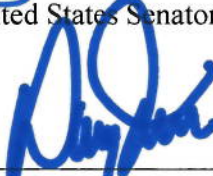
Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Doug Jones
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator




Jon Tester
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



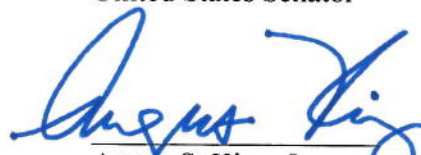
Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



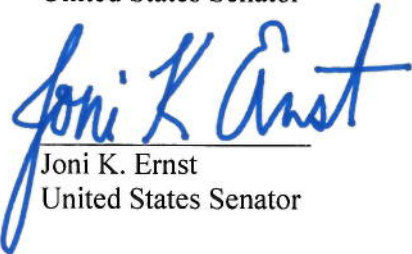
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



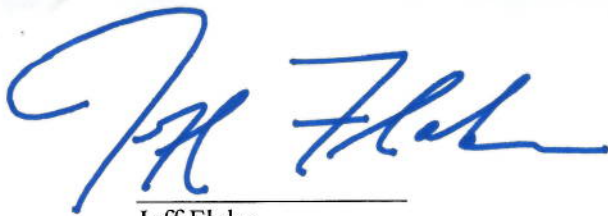
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



David A. Perdue
United States Senator



Jeff Flake
United States Senator



Ben Sasse
United States Senator



Ted Cruz
United States Senator



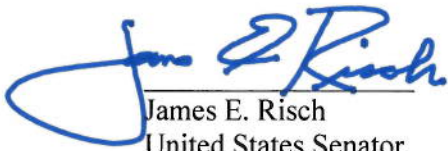
John Boozman
United States Senator



Tim Scott
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator



Dean Heller
United States Senator



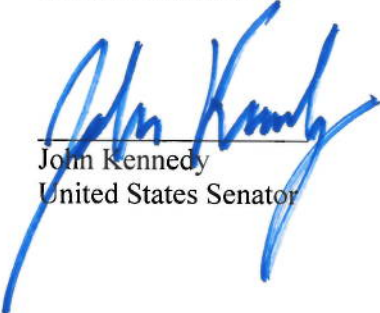
Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator




Todd Young
United States Senator



John Kennedy
United States Senator



Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



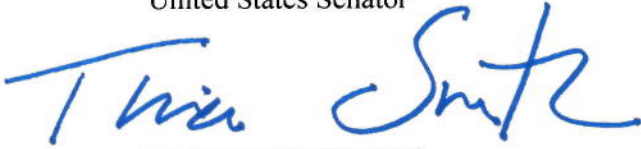
Ron Johnson
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator