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September 23, 2025

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The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), we write regarding your forthcoming meeting with president of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the White House on September 25, 2025.

In your announcement regarding your meeting with President Erdogan, you stated that it is your intention to engage with President Erdoğan on trade and military deals, including new sales of the F-16 Fighting Falcon and the potential future sale of the F-35 Lightning II – the latter of which Türkiye is banned from receiving due to the sanctions you previously placed on it through the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in 2019, following Türkiye's purchase of the S-400 Triumph (SA-21 Growler) from Russia. While we believe that pressure should be placed on Türkiye to demand the removal of S-400's from its possession, we strongly urge you to maintain CAATSA sanctions on Türkiye even if such weapon systems are removed – this will demonstrate such a purchase was not acceptable in the first place. Furthermore, due to many other actions by Türkiye listed herein this letter that run counter to American interests, we urge you to not initiate any additional sales of F-16s or other similar arms. Furthermore, we implore you to use your time with President Erdoğan to demand accountability for these anti-American actions, the most egregious of which are:

- The illegal occupation of the Republic of Cyprus and violation of Cypriot human rights.
- Threats to the sovereignty of NATO ally Greece through repeated airspace violations, illegal challenges to maritime boundaries, and iridescent, provocative language from President Erdoğan.
- Human rights violations, including actions that restrict the religious freedom of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.
- Threats to U.S. major non-NATO ally Israel, including threats of invasion.
- Providing political, logistical, and financial support to U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations, including Hamas.
- Purchase and possession of the Russian S-400 Triumph (SA-21 Growler).
- The continually expressed aspiration to join BRICS.
- President Erdoğan's growing closeness to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- Support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.
- Lack of action to prevent attacks on U.S. servicemembers in Türkiye.
- The illegal occupation of Syria and violation of Kurdish human rights.

Holding Türkiye Accountable for Aggression Towards Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, and Israel

Türkiye's provocative and destabilizing actions in Southern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean directly challenge the sovereignty and security of key U.S. allies and strategic partners, including Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, and Israel. In your meeting with President Erdoğan, we ask you bring up the following issues, which are non-exhaustive of Türkiye's actions that jeopardize American foreign policy interests:

Regarding Greece, Türkiye's aggressive maritime claims under its 'Blue Homeland' doctrine continue to exacerbate tensions in the region, hinder broader U.S. efforts to counter malign influences, and slow the development of energy by American companies. Additionally, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has personally continued to promote other irredentists claims that threaten the territorial integrity of Greece, going so far as threatening to attack it "suddenly one night" at the G20 summit in 2022, as reported by *Politico*.¹ These actions not only affect Greece in their capacity as a NATO ally, but also extend to directly opposing the presence of U.S. forces in the Southern European and Eastern Mediterranean regions. For example, Türkiye has repeatedly worked to undermine defense cooperation between the U.S. and Greece, including criticizing the presence of U.S. military bases in Greece.² Türkiye cannot be considered a reliable ally to the U.S. if they actively seek to disrupt methods of establishing and strengthening U.S. regional influence, which is accomplished through such bases, especially NSA Souda Bay in Crete.

Regarding the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), Turkish president Erdoğan has also repeatedly worked to undermine RoC defense cooperation with the U.S. For example, Türkiye has strongly opposed the U.S. decision to allow the Republic of Cyprus to participate in U.S. military training exercises, which have included partnering with U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant Craft Crewmen, U.S. Navy SEALs, the U.S. Air Force, and other military components – a critical element to improving the interoperability of U.S. forces with a country of increasing geopolitical significance. This interference from Türkiye occurs despite the U.S. military repeatedly lauding the "deliberate and strategic relationship between the U.S. and Cyprus" which "contributes to regional stability" and allows the U.S. and the Republic of Cyprus to "stand as a resolute force, ready to respond to any challenge and defend the shared interests of our nations."³ Furthermore, Türkiye's ongoing illegal occupation of the Republic of Cyprus, which now has continued for 51 years in violation of international law, merits being a priority on the agenda in your meeting. This issue is especially important to the U.S. given that, as stated in section 2373 of title 22 of the Code of Laws of the United States of America, Türkiye continues to use U.S. arms to facilitate its occupation, as "40,000 Turkish troops are stationed in the occupied part of Cyprus" which use equipment including "weapons procured from the United States through mainland Turkey."⁴ This use of U.S. arms should constitute a violation of the Arms Export Control Act limitation that U.S. arms are to only be used for legitimate self-defense purposes. Moreover, not only do these violations justify a strong public moral condemnation from the United States, but they also deserved to be addressed due to the detriment it has on the logistics of the U.S. presence in the region – the growing partnership between the U.S. and the Republic of Cyprus cannot be utilized to its fullest potential until the Turkish occupation ends and the Republic of Cyprus is reunified.

Regarding Israel, Türkiye has firmly placed itself against Israeli security interests, which jeopardizes the regional presence of the U.S. and cooperation between Israel, Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, and the U.S. under the "3+1" multilateral cooperation structure. As mentioned earlier, Members of Congress have voiced concern over Türkiye providing political, logistical, and financial support to

¹ Fiedler, Tristan "Erdoğan repeats threat against Greece during G20", *Politico*, November 16, 2022.

² Jenez, Levent. "Erdoğan sees US military presence in Greece as a threat to Turkey" *Nordic Monitor*, May 27, 2022.

³ Cannady, Darnell. "US, Cyprus military conduct bilateral training during Silver Falcon 2023" *U.S. Air Force*, February 24, 2023.

⁴ Carey, Martin. "Navy SEALs Forge Alliance with Cypriot Navy Underwater Demolition Team in Eastern Mediterranean" *The U.S. Navy*, February 14, 2024.

⁵ 22 U.S.C. § 2373.

enemies of the U.S. and Israel, including Hamas. Furthermore, Israel has voiced concern that Türkiye is cooperating with Iran to support other U.S. designated terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah, which threaten both Israeli and U.S. security.⁶

In addition, Turkish-backed groups in Syria threaten to undermine Israeli security interests and allow for a potential resurgence of ISIS. Türkiye's support of terrorist groups such as these not only harms Israel, but also harms U.S. policy goals. Beyond supporting actors perpetuating terrorism against Israel, Türkiye has announced it "severed all relations with Israel" in 2024 and closed its airspace for Israeli planes and ports for Israel maritime trade in 2025. Additionally, it has taken aggressive actions towards Israel directly through increasingly destabilizing rhetoric.⁷⁸ This includes labeling Israel as a "terrorist state", threatening to designate Israeli nationals as terrorists, imposing trade restrictions on Israel, and galvanizing regional opposition.⁹ Furthermore, Türkiye has even gone as far to suggest they may take military action against Israel "as she [Türkiye] did in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh" and Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has threatened to "send Netanyahu to Allah".¹⁰¹¹

Addressing Türkiye's Role in Supporting U.S. Designated Terrorist Organizations

On four occasions, Members of Congress wrote to former Secretary of State Antony Blinken, raising concerns about Türkiye providing political, logistical, and financial support to U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations, including Hamas.¹²¹³¹⁴¹⁵ Members of Congress also specifically inquired as to whether Türkiye's support of Hamas extends into areas within the Republic of Cyprus that Türkiye illegally occupies, which would allow Türkiye to give Hamas adjacent access to personnel and assets of the United States and its allies – this would drastically increase the risk that both our soldiers and our diplomats become targets of terrorism.¹⁶ Previously, Iran-backed terrorist groups have been apprehended in the occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus, which serves as a salient example of how when Türkiye prevents the Republic of Cyprus from enforcing their legal authority in this area, it harms U.S. security interests in the country.

Secretary Blinken's response to these inquiries was inadequate, and thus Türkiye's support of Hamas has continued. Recently, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan officially hosted the leadership of Hamas during its visit to Türkiye. Such support is not hidden by Türkiye, but rather, brazenly embraced by it; President Erdoğan himself stated "Hamas is not a terrorist organization, but rather a resistance movement, and we stand firmly behind them and [are] in constant contact with its leaders."¹⁷

We urge you to take a different approach from the Biden administration and hold Türkiye accountable for its support of terrorism, which severely undermines U.S. security efforts and emboldens actors that threaten our partners, particularly Israel. A strong and clear stance against Türkiye's ties to Hamas and other terrorist organizations is a must, and the U.S. should consider measures, including sanctions, to hold Türkiye accountable and to deter further support for terrorist entities from a NATO ally.

Attacks on U.S. Servicemembers

Multiple instances of U.S. servicemembers being assaulted in Türkiye have occurred, which typically involve bags being placed over the heads of the servicemembers while derogatory and anti-

⁶ Lazar, Berman "Sa'ar tells US delegation Turkey cooperating with Iran to smuggle money to Hezbollah", *The Times of Israel*, February 17, 2025.

⁷ Soyulu, Ragıp "Turkey severs all relations with Israel, says Erdogan", *Middle East Eye*, November 13, 2024.

⁸ "Turkey closes its airspace to Israeli planes and curbs Israel-bound trade over the Gaza war," *Associated Press*, August 29, 2025.

⁹ "Turkey's Erdogan calls Israel a 'terror state', criticises the West", *Aljazeera*, November 15, 2023.

¹⁰ "Erdogan says Turkey 'might enter Israel' as it did Karabakh and Libya", *Middle East Eye*, July 28, 2024.

¹¹ "Turkey's Erdogan threatens to 'send Netanyahu to Allah,' Israel summons envoy", *The Jerusalem Post*, March 23, 2024.

¹² "Letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken," *45 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives*, October 26, 2023.

¹³ "Letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken," *28 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives*, July 29, 2024.

¹⁴ "Letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken," *24 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives*, October 23, 2024.

¹⁵ "Letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and ODNI Director Avril Haines," *39 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives*, November 22, 2024.

¹⁶ "Letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken," *45 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives*, October 26, 2023.

¹⁷ "Turkey's Erdogan threatens to 'send Netanyahu to Allah,' Israel summons envoy", *The Jerusalem Post*, March 23, 2024.

American insults are shouted at them. These incidents have not been adequately addressed by the government of Türkiye and continue to occur, with the most recent instance being an attack on two U.S. Marines in 2024.¹⁸ Additionally, Türkiye has repeatedly endangered U.S. forces in Syria, including firing artillery on U.S. troops and engaging in drone strikes which the Pentagon stated, “directly threatened the safety of US personnel.”¹⁹²⁰

Promoting Human Rights, Religious Freedom, and Democratic Values

As highlighted by the U.S. Department of State, Türkiye’s internal policies and human rights record continue to deteriorate under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s rule.²¹ The United States must not turn a blind eye towards these abuses or else it risks them increasing in size and scope while remaining unchecked. As President of the United States, you can reinforce the commitment of America to uphold human rights by holding Türkiye accountable when it commits actions that threaten the basic freedoms of its own citizens.

In addition to a myriad of other areas of human rights abuses, Türkiye continues to establish policies that violate religious freedom, particularly that of Christians, including specifically undermining the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Türkiye has continuously converted historic churches, many of which are protected by UNESCO, into mosques. Following advocacy from AHI, the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom addressed these actions in a letter sent to AHI, in which the Ambassador specifically condemned the conversion of the Chora Museum and pledged that the Department of State will continue to address these actions by Türkiye.²² Additionally, the letter highlighted that the Department of State will continue to address the closing of the Halki Seminary, which severely limits access to Christian theological education in Türkiye – this issue was raised to you by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew last week, during your meeting with him at the White House.²³ Beyond official government actions, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan espouses rhetoric that endangers the safety and security of Christians in Türkiye and the Middle East.

As well as restricting religious freedoms within its legitimate boundaries, Türkiye also commits egregious acts against Christians through its occupation of the Republic of Cyprus. Not only has Türkiye used its occupying force to destroy churches and monasteries, desecrate Christian graves, and loot religious artifacts, but they also have restricted the ability of Christians to practice their faith. According to the Law Library of Congress, “Following the military invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and the continuing occupation of the northern part of Cyprus by Turkey, it has been documented that extensive destruction, desecration, and pillage of religious sites and other historic monuments, as well some disputed archaeological excavations and illegal exportation of objects, have occurred in the northern part of Cyprus.”²⁴

Additionally, Türkiye’s actions in the illegally occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus have come under repeated and pronounced condemnation from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission appointed by the president and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Regarding Cypriots “in the area of the Republic of Cyprus under the control of the Turkish troops”, the USCIRF has specifically raised attention to “restrictions on the access and use of their religious sites and places of worship” which is “seriously limited by the Turkish military.”²⁵

¹⁸ Ciddi, Sinan “U.S. Marines in Turkey Assaulted by Nationalist Youth Group,” *FDD*, Sept. 5, 2024.

¹⁹ DeWalt, Brook. “DOD Statement on Artillery Incident Near Kobani”, *U.S. Department of Defense*, October 11, 2019.

²⁰ Liebermann, Oren. “US military says American troops were at risk from Turkish strike on base in Syria this week”, *CNN*, November 23, 2022.

²¹ “2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices”, *The United States Department of State*, April 22, 2024.

²² “Letter to Mr. Nick Larigakis”, *The United States Department of State*, February 28, 2024.

²³ “Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Has Private Oval Office Meeting with President Trump”, *Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate*, Sept. 16, 2025.

²⁴ “Cyprus: USCIRF Concerned Over Demolition of 200-Year-Old Church in Northern Cyprus”, *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*, May 12, 2011.

²⁵ “Cyprus: Destruction of Cultural Property in the Northern Part of Cyprus and Violations of International Law”, *The Law Library of Congress*, April 2009.

Mr. President, in your upcoming meeting with President Erdoğan, we urge you to press him for accountability regarding all the aforementioned actions taken by Türkiye outlined in this letter which undermines U.S. foreign interests. We further respectfully urge you to reinforce the commitment of the U.S. to our alliances and partnerships in the Eastern Mediterranean and make it clear that threats to Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, and Israel are unacceptable. Türkiye's actions require a firm, unambiguous public U.S. response - by holding Türkiye accountable for its violations of international law and actions against U.S. regional goals in this way, you can more fully ensure that our national interests are being met.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Larigakis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nick" being more prominent than the last name "Larigakis".

Nick Larigakis
President

CC: Secretary of State Marco Rubio
Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth
US Ambassador to the Republic of Türkiye Thomas J. Barrack
National Security Council Senior Director for Europe Charles McLaughlin
The U.S. Congress