

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 23, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to you again with grave concerns about Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's recent inflammatory rhetoric and behavior. While allies often disagree, Erdoğan's recent conduct has undermined U.S. efforts to counter global terrorism. With democracy under assault around the world, it is crucial that allies stand together with those on the frontlines fighting authoritarianism and strongly condemn antidemocratic conduct that violates our shared values. We urge the Administration to publicly condemn President Erdoğan's rhetoric and actions that undermine support for key allies abroad, especially Israel.

On July 9, 2024, many of us sent you a letter outlining our concerns about Erdoğan's remarks regarding Israel and requesting that you condemn his continued support for the terrorist regime responsible for the October 7 attacks. In this letter we enumerated several dangerous and inflammatory comments made by Erdoğan, including calling Hamas terrorists "freedom fighters"¹ and labeling Israel as a "terrorist state."² Since that time, President Erdoğan has continued to make statements and propose policies that undercut our international partnerships and alliances. These actions are unfortunately consistent with Erdoğan's history of aligning with authoritarian and terrorist regimes while spurning American and European priorities.

Erdoğan's comments are despicable, and his conduct continues to undermine America's security interests abroad, playing directly into the hands of autocrats around the world. Specifically, Erdoğan has exacerbated divisions within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) operations and security. Earlier this summer, Erdoğan vowed to block NATO's existing and future cooperation with Israel.³ Israel is a crucial and valued partner of NATO, contributing significantly to areas such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), counter-terrorism, and intelligence sharing. Erdoğan's threat to sever these ties would obstruct NATO from receiving critical technology and counter-defense information.

¹ Foreign Policy, "The United States Needs to Play Hardball with Turkey," January 5, 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/01/05/biden-erdogan-hamas-turkey-hardball-diplomacy/>

² FDD Analysis, "Turkish President Escalates Anti-Israel Rhetoric," November 16, 2023, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/11/16/turkish-president-escalates-anti-israel-rhetoric/>

³ Ibid.

While participating in NATO, Erdoğan has simultaneously strengthened Turkey's ties with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. He has abandoned Turkey's quest to join the European Union and now aspires to become a member of BRICS, a group that supports elevating the international standing and influence of our adversaries, including Russia, China, and Iran.⁴ No other member of NATO has joined BRICS, given the clear security conflicts and concerns. Just days before traveling to the NATO Summit in Washington, Erdoğan met with his "dear friend" Vladimir Putin to reaffirm their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing cooperation in Syria.⁵ Comments like this directly undermine the U.S.'s support for Ukraine's defense against Russia's unprovoked invasion and opposition to the Assad regime, one of the worst human rights abusers on the planet.

Erdoğan's promotion of harmful, anti-democratic policies and alignment with the Axis of Evil strains the relationship between the United States and Turkey. If this trend continues, the United States should consider steps to ensure Turkey complies with its obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty. While maintaining NATO unity is essential, Erdoğan's recent anti-Israel rhetoric and Russia friendliness cannot be overlooked and ignored. We urge the Administration to publicly condemn President Erdoğan's rhetoric and actions that undermine support for key allies abroad, especially Israel.

Sincerely,



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Greg Landsman
Member of Congress

⁴ AP News. "Turkey Wants to Join the BRICS Bloc of Developing Economies, Official Confirms | AP News," September 3, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-brics-developing-economies-erdogan-foreign-policy-15a2428e73e804732085f78b9c5c3c50>.


⁵ Akin, E. (2024, July 3). Erdogan meets "dear friend" Putin as Russia, Turkey eye cooperation on Syria. Al-Monitor: The Middle East's Leading Independent News Source Since 2012. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/07/erdogan-meets-dear-friend-putin-russia-turkey-eye-cooperation-syria>



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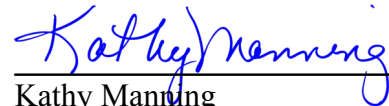
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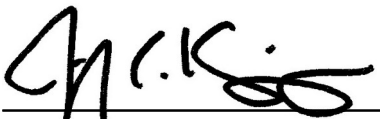
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