Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 2, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We are writing to bring to your attention the deeply concerning human rights situation in Turkey, particularly the transnational repression campaign orchestrated by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government against its critics abroad. Additionally, we highlight the alarming instances of Interpol abuses by Turkey, including the forcible transfer of more than 100 Turkish nationals since the 2016 coup, with reports of torture, denial of legal rights, and coerced confessions. The Erdogan government has sought to silence critics in the United States like Enes Kanter Freedom, an NBA player and human rights advocate, by going after his family in Turkey and placing an Interpol red notice and bounty on him and on many others. This further underscores the need for urgent intervention to address Turkey's non-compliance with international law and its systematic human rights abuses.

Predating the adoption of broad anti-terror legislation in 2018, and continuing since its enactment, the Turkish government has violated human rights and compromised the rule of law. Since the 2016 coup attempt, tens of thousands of civil servants, government workers, police, military personnel, judges, prosecutors, and citizens have been dismissed, suspended, arrested, or imprisoned on terrorism-related grounds. The government's crackdown extends to media outlets, nongovernmental organizations, and opposition figures, severely restricting freedom of expression, press freedom, and peaceful assembly.

Over the past two decades, Turkey’s government has captured over 90% of the media landscape, including direct control over the country’s public media and indirect control over much of the mainstream media through party-aligned oligarchs. The capture of mainstream media has been backed by a mass crackdown on independent media. Gulen sympathizers and Kurdish journalists are disproportionately targeted by this crackdown with long pre-trial detentions and frequent police raids conducted in the offices of newspapers obstructing the important work of journalists. The so-called disinformation law has been used to stifle press freedom, including the targeting of at least 20 journalists.

Turkish transnational repression has reached alarming levels, with reports of more than 100 Turkish nationals forcibly transferred to Turkey since the 2016 coup. Individuals associated

with the Gulen movement, a faith-based civil society organization promoting interfaith dialogue and education, have been among those abused.

The State Department's 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in Turkey highlight the government's coordination with other authoritarian states in forcibly transferring individuals and engaging in abductions and renditions. The victims face torture, denial of legal rights, and coerced confessions before being deported to Turkey. These acts are publicly promoted and glorified by government-led media.

Selahattin Gulen, for example, a teacher, was abducted from Kenya; Koray Vural, a businessman, from Tajikistan. Orhan Inandi, chairman of a successful school network, was abducted from Kyrgyzstan and faced torture in prison with Turkish media showing his broken arm.

The Human Rights Association (İHD), which monitors the most serious victimization of prisoners, reports that 1,605 patients, 604 of whom are seriously ill, are fighting for their lives in prisons across Turkey. Stockholm Center for Freedoms and the Purge Museum reported that at least 81 prisoners in Turkey died in 2022.

Turkey's pressure on other countries to close successful math and science academies affiliated with the Gulen movement is deeply concerning.

The UN Special Rapporteur's letter in 2020 condemned the systematic practice of state-sponsored extraterritorial abduction and forcible return of Turkish citizens from multiple countries. Victims face torture, pressure, and humiliation before being deported, with the Turkish government neither denying nor hiding these actions.

In 2023, Freedom House recorded 125 incidents of transnational repression committed by 25 governments. Their database now includes 1,034 direct, physical cases of transnational repression in 100 countries, carried out by 44 governments since 2014, including Turkey as both a country of origin and a host country. Journalists living in the U.S. have faced closure of bank accounts and various repercussions due to baseless terrorism accusations from the Turkish government.

Recent decisions by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) regarding Selahattin Demirtas, Osman Kavala, and Yuksel Yalcinkaya underscore the urgency of addressing Turkey's non-compliance with international law. The ECHR ruled that the extended detention of Selahattin Demirtas, the Kurdish politician, and Osman Kavala, the philanthropist, was politically motivated and lacked reasonable suspicion.

The ECHR also ruled that Turkey violated the right to liberty and security, freedom of expression, and the right to a fair trial in the case of Yalcinkaya, a teacher. These decisions highlight the systematic nature of human rights abuses in Turkey and its disregard for international legal standards.

We urge you, President Biden, to prioritize human rights and press the Turkish government to cease its transnational repression campaign, unconditionally release political prisoners, and restore the rule of law. Your intervention is crucial to upholding the values of democracy and human rights on the global stage.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress

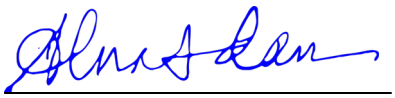
Randy K. Weber, Sr.
Member of Congress

Dan Goldman
Member of Congress

Sharice L. Davids
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Joseph D. Morelle
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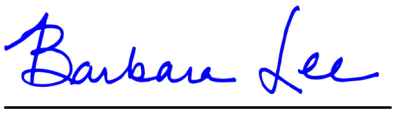
Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



Nick LaLota
Member of Congress



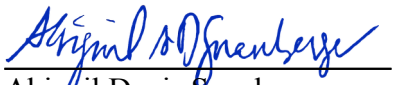
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



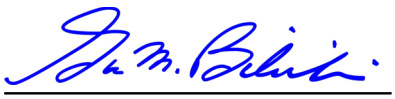
Delia C. Ramirez
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Joe Courtney
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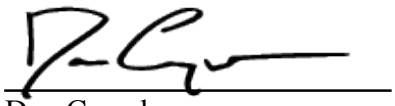
Abigail Davis Spanberger
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



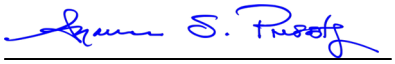
Yvette D. Clarke
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Dan Crenshaw
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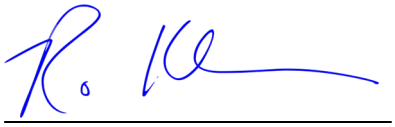
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



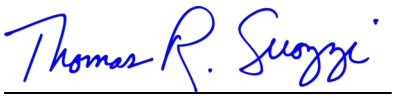
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



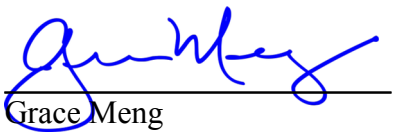
Frank Pallone, Jr.
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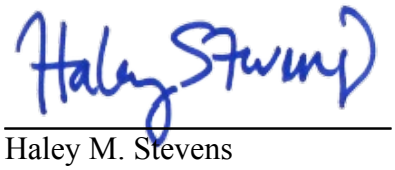
Ro Khanna
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Thomas R. Suozzi
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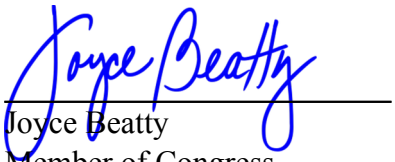
Grace Meng
Member of Congress



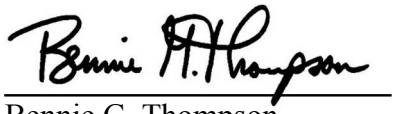
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
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Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



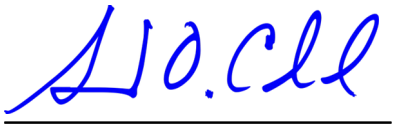
Bennie G. Thompson
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John H. Rutherford
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Emanuel Cleaver, II
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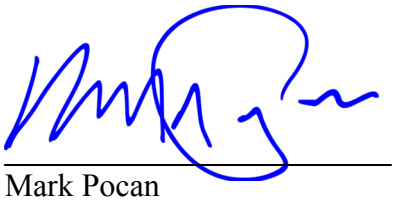
Salud Carbajal
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Summer L. Lee
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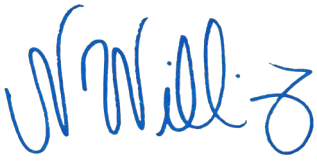
David J. Trone
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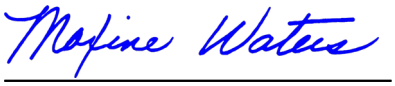
Eric Swalwell
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Nikema Williams
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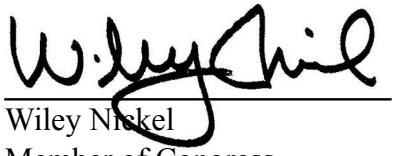
Maxine Waters
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Andrew R. Garbarino
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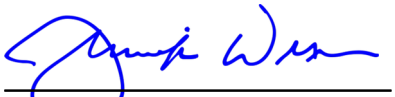
Dina Titus
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Wiley Nickel
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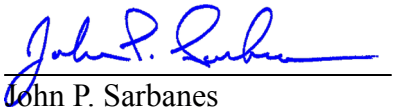
Mikie Sherrill
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Jennifer Wexton
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Aaron Bean
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John P. Sarbanes
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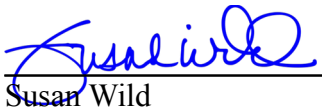
Ken Calvert
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Jefferson Van Drew
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Barry Loudermilk
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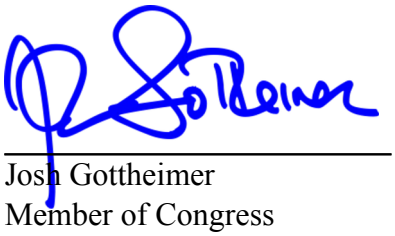
Brandon Williams
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Kevin Mullin
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Josh Gottheimer
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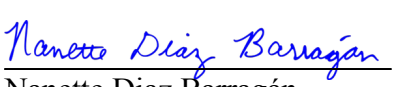
David G. Valadao
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Adriano Espaillat
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
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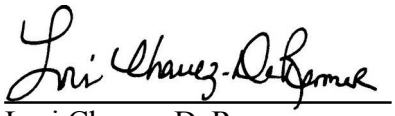
Darren Soto
Member of Congress



French Hill
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Seth Moulton
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Lori Chavez-DeRemer
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
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Danny K. Davis
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James P. McGovern
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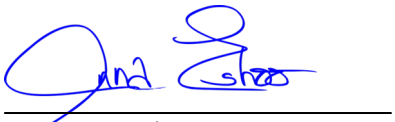
Jeff Jackson
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



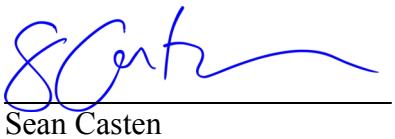
Daniel T. Kildee
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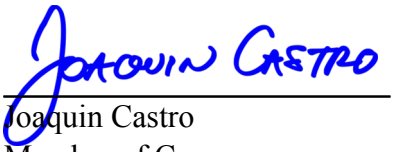
Anna G. Eshoo
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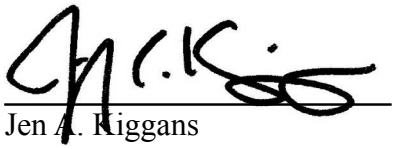
Troy E. Nehls
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Jen A. Kiggans
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



John R. Moolenaar
Member of Congress



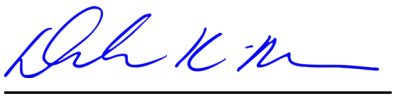
Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress



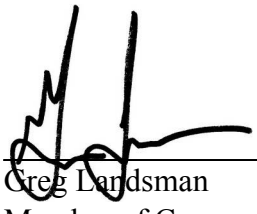
Young Kim
Member of Congress



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



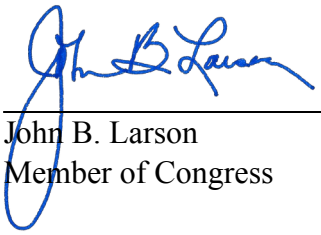
Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress



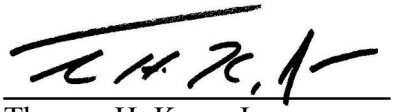
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Lloyd Smucker
Member of Congress



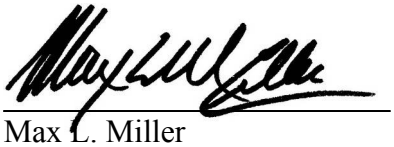
Andy Kim
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
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Al Green
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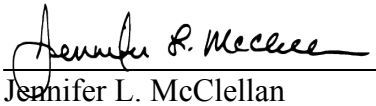
Max L. Miller
Member of Congress



Michael V. Lawler
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Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



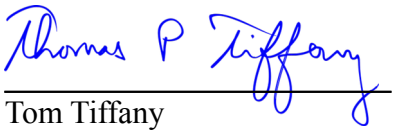
Pat Fallon
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



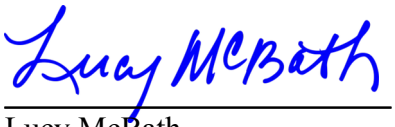
Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



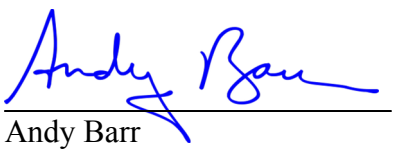
Michael Waltz
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



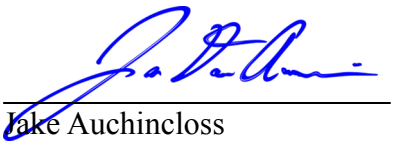
Jim Costa
Member of Congress



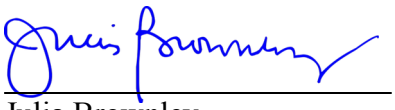
Andy Barr
Member of Congress



Michelle Steel
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Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



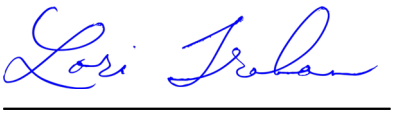
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



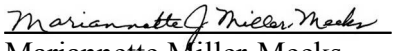
Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



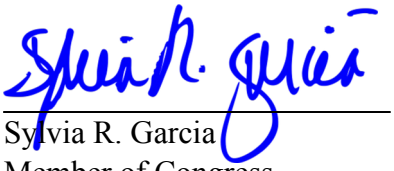
Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



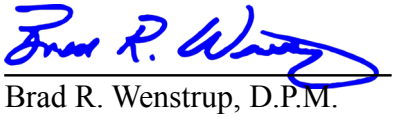
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



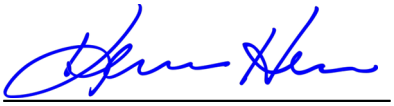
Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress



Andrew Ogles
Member of Congress



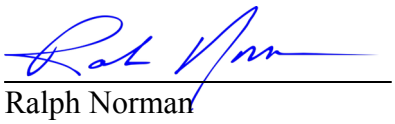
Brad R. Wenstrup, D.P.M.
Member of Congress



Kevin Hern
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



Mark Alford
Member of Congress



Burgess Owens
Member of Congress



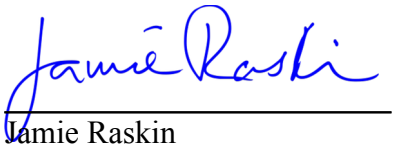
Keith Self
Member of Congress



Susie Lee
Member of Congress



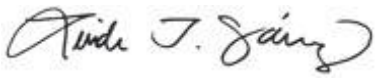
Beth Van Duyne
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



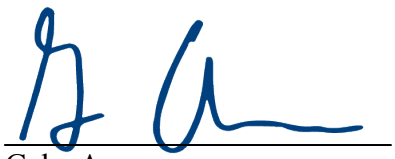
Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



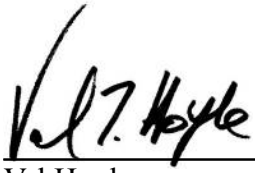
Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Anthony D'Esposito
Member of Congress



Rich McCormick, MD, MBA
Member of Congress



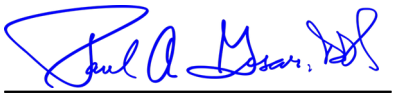
Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Chuck Edwards
Member of Congress



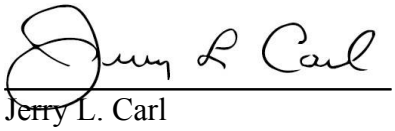
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar
Member of Congress



Stephanie Bice
Member of Congress



Jerry L. Carl
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Celeste Maloy
Member of Congress

Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress

Scott Perry
Member of Congress