February 9, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We congratulate you on being sworn in as 46th President of the United States of America. As a Presidential candidate, you spoke of strengthening our alliances and promoting democracy as a bulwark against a rising global tide of authoritarianism. We have long shared those beliefs, and we write regarding the ongoing human rights situation in Turkey and ask that you press the Turkish government to improve its troubling record.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has taken the country down an increasingly authoritarian path. He has systematically marginalized domestic opposition, silenced or coopted critical media outlets, purged independent judges and replaced them with party loyalists and jailed scores of journalists. The Committee to Protect Journalists ranks Turkey behind only China in number of imprisoned media workers. Freedom House rated Turkey “Not Free” in its 2020 Freedom in the World Report. And the U.S. State Department’s 2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices noted: “under broad antiterror legislation the government restricted fundamental freedoms and compromised the rule of law.”

President Erdogan’s foreign policy has also grown more belligerent and combative over time. In recent years, he brazenly attacked U.S.-backed Kurds fighting ISIS in Syria, he purchased Russian air defense systems despite warnings that they were incompatible with U.S. technology, and he encouraged Azerbaijan to use violence to settle a territorial dispute with Armenia. President Erdogan has also attempted to pressure the U.S. and other countries into extraditing Turkish nationals, whom he blames for the failed coup in 2016. The Erdogan government has sought to silence critics in the United States like Enes Kanter, an NBA player and human rights advocate, by going after his family in Turkey and placing an INTERPOL red notice on him.

Turkey remains an important ally in a significant region of the world, and it is precisely for this reason that we write you today. We believe that the United States must hold allies and partners to a higher standard and speak frankly with them about issues of human rights and democratic backsliding. We urge you to emphasize to President Erdogan and his administration that they should immediately end their crackdown on dissent at home and abroad, release political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and reverse their authoritarian course.
America has a bipartisan tradition of promoting basic human rights and democratic principles. We believe deeply in continuing this important tradition and stand ready to assist your administration on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Marco Rubio
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

John Thune
United States Senator

/s/
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Ben Sasse
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

John Boozman
United States Senator
/s/
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Maggie Hassan
United States Senator

Chuck Grassley
United States Senator

John Cornyn
United States Senator

Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator

Kevin Cramer
United States Senator

Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

Mike Braun  
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

Todd Young  
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

Mitt Romney  
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

John Kennedy  
United States Senator

/s/  
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

Jerry Moran  
United States Senator