

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 21, 2018

His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
President of the Republic of Turkey  
T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Genel Sekreterliği  
06689 Çankaya, Ankara  
Turkey

Dear President Erdoğan,

I write today to express my grave concern over recent developments in the imprisonment of U.S. citizen Andrew Brunson and what appears to be your government's growing erosion of the rule of law. Media reports this week stated that the Second-High Penal Court in Izmir has accepted an indictment by the prosecutor's office formally charging Mr. Brunson of "committing crimes on behalf of terror organizations without being a member" and "political or military espionage." The indictment's reported identification of Fikret Böcek as a "Presbyterian CIA operative" is also concerning, and demonstrably false.

Reports indicate also that the indictment and related accusations against Mr. Brunson rely on the testimony of a secret witness. Given that Mr. Brunson has been imprisoned for one-and-half years during the public prosecutor's investigation, the continued failure to promulgate evidence in support of the grave charges levied against him is deeply troubling.

Mr. President, I urge you to ensure that Mr. Brunson be released immediately from his unjust imprisonment and cleared of all the spurious charges against him. Doing so would be consistent with Turkey's obligations under international law, including the right to freedom of religion and belief guaranteed in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The release of Mr. Brunson and end to the unjust targeting of Mr. Böcek would also be appreciated as a humanitarian gesture, given the considerable distress their families have endured.

I share these concerns with you in the spirit of candor that befits the longstanding alliance and strategic partnership between our nations. As a fellow member of NATO and valued U.S. ally in the region, I remain committed to working with Turkey on the many areas of common interest our nation's share in the region.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I will look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Senator Ben Sasse