



UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

September 14, 2018

President Donald Trump
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you on behalf of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to express our concern regarding the upcoming visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the United States later this month and his participation in an investment conference in New York City hosted by a Turkish organization, the Turkey-U.S. Business Council, which is not part of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. That President Erdoğan will be on American soil to solicit business investments among American companies is troubling given his personal and public support for the continued, unlawful detainment in Turkey of American Pastor Andrew Brunson.

We respectfully urge any U.S. officials and entities participating in the conference to reconsider the merits of conducting business with Turkey under the current conditions. The lack of rule of law and deteriorating human rights in Turkey, as exemplified by the case of American Pastor Andrew Brunson, is a serious cause for concern and not conducive to a positive business climate at this time.

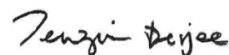
USCIRF has been a leading voice advocating for Pastor Brunson's release. In October 2017, two USCIRF Commissioners were Pastor Brunson's first visitors in Kırıklar Prison outside of family, legal counsel, and U.S. Embassy officials. Our vice chair, Kristina Arriaga, advocates for Pastor Brunson as part of USCIRF's Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project. Although Pastor Brunson was moved to house arrest on July 25, 2018 due to health concerns, a move that USCIRF welcomed, we remain concerned for Pastor Brunson's safety and security, and similarly for his family. The high-profile nature of Pastor Brunson's case and regular, inflammatory public commentary by Turkish officials, including President Erdoğan, have created a precarious and potentially volatile environment that could put the safety of Pastor Brunson and his family at heightened risk.

USCIRF commends your personal efforts, as well as the efforts of your administration including those of Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, to secure Pastor Brunson's release. We ask that you and any U.S. officials that may interact with President Erdoğan or his representatives continue to raise the case of Pastor Brunson in all aspects of the U.S.-Turkey relationship and urge U.S. entities to reconsider pursuing business opportunities with Turkey at this time.

732 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NW SUITE A714 | WASHINGTON, DC 20401 | (202) 523-3240

Tenzin Dorjee, Chair • Kristina Arriaga de Bucholz, Vice Chair • Gayle Conelly Manchin, Vice Chair
Gary L. Bauer • Andy Khawaja • Nadine Maenza • Johnnie Moore • Tony Perkins
Erin D. Singhsinsuk, Executive Director
www.uscirtf.gov

Sincerely,



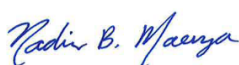
Tenzin Dorjee
Chair



Kristina Arriaga
Vice Chair



Gary L. Bauer
Commissioner



Nadine Maenza
Commissioner



Tony Perkins
Commissioner



Gayle Manchin
Vice Chair



Andy Khawaja
Commissioner



Johnnie Moore
Commissioner

cc: The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader

Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce