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November 7, 2019

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President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), I write to convey our profound disappointment that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will visit the White House on November 13, 2019.

Turkey is not a friend of the United States, let alone an ally. We vehemently opposed your invite to Mr. Erdogan because his authoritarianism must not be rewarded or dignified with a visit to the White House. An autocratic figure, Mr. Erdogan will make your meeting a propaganda piece to curry favor with his base. Although there are those who claim this meeting is an opportunity to send a strong message to Turkey, we strongly contend there were alternative ways to achieve that objective. However, because it is set to take place, you must therefore deliver a clear, stern message that Turkey will be held accountable for its illegal activities in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Under President Erdogan, Turkey has been a habitual violator of the rule of law. Turkey has:

- accepted delivery of Russia's S-400 missile defense system,
- engaged in negotiations to purchase Russia's Su-35 jet fighters,
- invaded northeast Syria, which was not in the best security interest of the United States,
- Repeatedly violated and occupied, respectfully, Greece's airspace and waterways in violation of international and U.S. law, including the Arms Export Control Act,
- conducted illegal drilling in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus, which is in violation of international law and has received widespread condemnation,
- enabled ISIS fighters to transit Turkish territory to sell oil and other products and provided other support to ISIS,
- openly supported Hamas and its policies which violates the security of Israel,
- continued to impede the reunification of the Republic of Cyprus and continues to illegally occupy the Republic with 40,000 Turkish troops as it has since 1974; and
- continued to suppress religious freedom for minorities, including the Turkish government's tolerance of assaults upon Greek Orthodox Christian community and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the spiritual home of the world's oldest and second largest Christian Church.

Further, we are disappointed with the State Department's announcement that your administration is opposed to the two measures passed by the U.S. House of Representatives last week, which imposed sanctions on Turkey and recognized the Armenian genocide, because "the two initiatives risk further straining relations with a key NATO ally." Turkey has never proven to be a faithful NATO ally and the State Department's rationale for this position is moot and the evidence does not support it.

This is not the message the United States must send to Turkey. In the best interest of the United States, AHI urges the U.S. government to send an even stronger message to Turkey with targeted sanctions against the Turkish entities responsible for Turkey's illegal actions. In addition, AHI strongly recommends your Administration to oppose foreign assistance to Turkey, and any other assistance programs, including any trade benefits.

Mr. President, Turkey is a significant force of instability and a failed U.S. ally. Your recent praise of Mr. Erdogan as a "hell of a leader" only serves to embolden Mr. Erdogan as he continues to act provocatively and brazenly to destabilize the Eastern Mediterranean, and the broader region, with impunity. Next week's visit also reminds us of Mr. Erdogan's previous visit to Washington when members of his security detail assaulted peaceful American protesters on American soil. Therefore, during your meeting with Mr. Erdogan, we insist that you champion the rule of law and urge Turkey, the provocateur of these tensions, to cease and desist with its hostile and illegal actions that threaten peace and stability—or face certain consequences. These actions are not those of an ally and are not in the best interests of the United States.

Respectfully submitted,

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis
President

CC: Michael R. Pence, Vice President of the United States
Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State
Robert C. O'Brien, National Security Adviser to President Donald J. Trump
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Special Representative for the Western Balkans
Maria Olson, Director of the Office of Southern European Affairs, Department of State
David Berns, Deputy Director of the Office of Southern European Affairs, Department of State
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