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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Chairman Wicker, Co-Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Cardin, Ranking Member Hastings, Senator Tillis, and Members of the Commission. Thank you for inviting me to testify this morning.

Today's hearing is an important opportunity to reaffirm the abiding U.S. interest in and commitment to democracy, human rights, and rule of law in Turkey. It is also an opportunity to underscore the value of the U.S.-Turkey Alliance, despite the current strains in the bilateral relationship and the challenges facing Turkey today.

U.S.-Turkey Alliance

Having spent the last 65 years as NATO Allies, the United States and Turkey have deep and complex relations. With the second-largest military force in the Alliance, a dynamic economy, and a population of 80 million, Turkey's critical position and regional clout have given Ankara significant influence on issues of core U.S. interest over the years. For example, from the early 1990s until 2003, Turkey facilitated the no-fly zone over the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, allowing it to develop in peace and escape Saddam Hussein's tyranny. In Afghanistan, Turkey was a major troop contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), while also providing use of its airspace and allowing the refueling of U.S. aircraft on ISAF missions. Our long history of allied military cooperation also includes operations in Korea, the Balkans, and Somalia.

Apart from military affairs, we share many goals and concerns. Like us, Turkey wants to limit Iranian and Russian influence in its region; it supports a unified and sovereign Iraq; and it remains a partner in efforts to resolve the war in Syria. The Turkish government and people also deserve recognition for the enormous hospitality they have displayed in hosting more than three million Syrian refugees. We value Turkey's efforts to foster regional stability and its contributions to global security.

Turkey is an important partner in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and provides critical bases for U.S. and Coalition military forces, from which we conduct precision airstrikes; carry out intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance flights; maintain combat search and rescue units; and resupply Coalition forces in closer proximity than possible from a U.S. base in the Persian

Gulf. Turkish forces were critical in liberating key territory from ISIS along Turkey's southern border and degrading ISIS's lines of communication to the outside world. For our part, we underscore our commitment to stand with Turkey against terrorist threats, including the PKK and ISIS.

The U.S.-Turkey relationship extends beyond our mutual interest in stability and security in the Balkans and the Middle East. Both President Trump and President Erdogan have committed to strengthening our trade and investment ties, as underscored by discussions in September on our bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. The recent proposal for Boeing to provide Turkish Airlines with forty Dreamliner passenger aircraft – a deal that, if finalized, is worth \$10.8 billion and is expected to sustain 25,000 U.S. jobs – illustrates the potential of our economic relationship. Our extensive exchanges of students, scientists, and professionals ensure our countries remain interconnected on a people-to-people level and provide valuable opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship, which are vital to our knowledge-based economies.

Ankara seeks further improvement in each of these areas of cooperation – and so do we. We will continue our efforts to develop constructive dialogue in order to maximize the enduring benefits of our strategic alliance.

Democracy, Human Rights, and Rule of Law

In my remaining remarks today, I would like to focus on the U.S. Government's concerns over Turkey's protracted state of emergency, which has had negative effects on democracy and democratic institutions, on human rights, and on rule of law. Chief among those concerns is the security of and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for U.S. citizens in Turkey and locally employed staff at the U.S. Mission in Turkey, a number of whom have been arrested on dubious terrorism charges under the state of emergency.

As I highlight these concerns, it is in the context of Turkey being a longtime friend and Ally, and with deep empathy and appreciation for the fact that on July 15, 2016, Turkey endured a traumatic coup d'état attempt. We continue to support Turkey's efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the failed coup. It is in the national interest of both the United States and Turkey for Turkey to be stable, democratic, and prosperous. We continue to support Turkey's democratic development and vigorously encourage application of the rule of law, including due process, transparency, and judicial independence.

The July 2016 attempted coup, in which nearly 250 perished and thousands were wounded, was an evil attack on democracy and a tragedy for Turks, who bravely took to the streets to defend their democracy. A few months later, I stood in Turkey's parliament building, the Grand National Assembly, and observed the destruction that Turkish Air Force F-16s had wrought on the people's house, in which all political parties sit. The Turks asked me to imagine the national trauma if such an attack had happened here on our Capitol dome. The Turkish nation was shaken by the coup attempt and remains so.

It is to be expected that Turkey would – and we support its efforts to – investigate and arrest those who directly participated or materially aided in the planning, preparation, and conduct of the coup attempt. The U.S. Government is carefully reviewing material provided by Turkey related to the Turkish Government’s request that the United States extradite Fethullah Gulen and will give similarly careful consideration to any new extradition requests related to the coup attempt. We again underscore our willingness to assist Turkish authorities in their investigation of the attempted coup and support bringing to justice those who participated.

Now, more than one year later, a restrictive state of emergency remains in place and appears to have been used expansively to target many Turks with no connection to the coup attempt. We were concerned to see Turkey extend the state of emergency for a fifth time on October 17 for an additional three months.

The prolongation of the state of emergency has, in the view of the U.S. Government, negatively impacted Turkish democracy, rule of law, and respect for fundamental freedoms. The Turkish government has expropriated nearly one thousand private businesses and dismissed well over 100,000 from their jobs. Tens of thousands have been arrested on terror-related charges. Authorities have imprisoned a growing number of opposition lawmakers, journalists, leading intellectuals, academics, civil society activists, and respected human rights defenders – including respected philanthropist Osman Kavala, Amnesty International Turkey’s Chairman Taner Kilic, and its recently released Director Idil Eser. We call on the Turkish government to expeditiously end the state of emergency, release those not proven guilty of criminal offenses, expedite due process for dismissed civil servants, and cease the seemingly indiscriminate prosecution of individuals – in many cases, individuals that appear to have been targeted because they criticize the government, its officials, or its policies, or have had contact with those who did.

As the Department of State has made clear in numerous press statements since the coup attempt, these detentions and prosecutions, often with little evidence, transparency, or effective mechanism for redress, undermine confidence in the rule of law in Turkey. The U.S. Mission in Turkey is closely following these cases, monitoring trials, engaging with civil society leaders, and working with like-minded partners to underscore the importance of respect for rule of law and individual rights, including fair trial guarantees. These rights are enshrined in the Turkish Constitution and are part of Turkey’s international obligations and commitments.

Additionally, we have seen a worrisome diminishment in freedom of the media and freedom of expression. Detentions of journalists under emergency rule have effectively silenced most independent media, most notably via the trial of 17 journalists and media executives – four of whom remain in custody – for Turkey’s leading independent newspaper, Cumhuriyet. As we have expressed publicly and to the Turkish government on numerous occasions, curbs on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, and other fundamental freedoms erode the foundations of democratic society, and are impediments to re-establishing the social and legal underpinnings of state and public security. Turkey benefits from having more engaged voices, not fewer – even voices it may find controversial or uncomfortable.

American Citizen Detentions

One of the Department of State's highest priorities is assisting U.S. citizens abroad and providing all possible consular services to U.S. citizens in need.

There have been dozens of U.S. citizens detained or delayed by Turkish security services in some capacity since July 2016. Several U.S. citizens, including U.S.-Turkish dual nationals, remain in prison under the state of emergency, all facing dubious terrorism and coup attempt-related charges.

As there is no international obligation to grant consular access to dual nationals, and as Turkey does not consider U.S.-Turkish dual nationals to be U.S. citizens for the purposes of consular notification, we were long denied access to our dual nationals detained under state of emergency provisions. After sustained U.S. Government engagement, the Government of Turkey for the first time granted us consular access to these dual nationals in mid-October of this year. High-level conversations continue to enhance cooperation and are yielding progress on a range of legal issues.

Andrew Brunson, a U.S. citizen and Christian pastor who has lived in Turkey for nearly 25 years, has been in prison since October 7, 2016. Of the U.S. citizens now detained in Turkey under the state of emergency, he has been held the longest without a judicial hearing. The outlandish charges against Mr. Brunson include gathering state secrets for espionage, attempting to overthrow the Turkish parliament and government, and attempting to change the constitutional order. The United States consistently calls for Mr. Brunson's release at the highest levels – President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Secretary Tillerson have all raised his case multiple times with their Turkish counterparts. On August 15, Secretary Tillerson publicly called for his release during the International Religious Freedom Report rollout. Our Embassy in Ankara continues to engage on this case and provide consular services to Mr. Brunson and his family, meeting with him and his wife on a regular basis.

We remain deeply concerned about the detention of all U.S. citizens, including U.S.-Turkish dual nationals, who have been arrested under the state of emergency. We will continue to visit them when possible, raise their cases with our Turkish counterparts, and seek a satisfactory resolution of their cases.

Locally Employed Staff and Visa Suspension

Under the state of emergency, the Government of Turkey arrested two of U.S. Mission Turkey's locally employed staff on what we believe are specious grounds. Longtime U.S. Consulate Adana employee Hamza Ulucay has been in detention since February 23, 2017. On October 5, Turkish authorities detained longtime Consulate Istanbul DEA local employee Metin Topuz. A number of other locally employed staff have come under investigation, and one employee's wife and daughter were held in jail without charges for nine days last month. The Turkish government has leveled flimsy terrorism charges against both Mr. Ulucay and Mr. Topuz. It appears they were arrested for maintaining legitimate contacts with government officials and

others in the context of their official duties on behalf of the U.S. Government. We have and will continue to push for their release.

The targeting of U.S. local staff, particularly those responsible for law enforcement coordination, raised our concern over Turkey's commitment to providing proper security for our diplomatic and consular facilities and personnel, leading to Mission Turkey's suspension of non-immigrant visa services on October 8. We have received initial high-level assurances from the Government of Turkey that there are no additional local employees of our Mission in Turkey under investigation. We have also received initial assurances from the Government of Turkey that our local staff will not be detained or arrested for performing their official duties, and that Turkish authorities will inform the U.S. Government in advance if the Government of Turkey intends to detain or arrest a member of our local staff.

Based on these preliminary assurances, we determined the security posture had improved sufficiently to allow for the resumption of limited visa services in Turkey. However, Mr. Ulucay and Mr. Topuz remain in custody and we have serious concerns about their cases. We will continue to engage with our Turkish counterparts to seek a satisfactory resolution of these cases, as well.

No Linkage Between Cases in U.S., Turkey

Some in the Turkish government have made efforts to equate cases involving our local staff with the arrest in the United States of a senior executive of Turkey's state-owned Halk Bank. The two situations and contexts are very different and the U.S. Government strongly objects to any effort to link them. The executive, Mehmet Hakan Atilla, has been charged with conspiring to evade U.S. sanctions against Iran. Our employees were arrested on terrorism charges based on contact, in the course of their official duties, with Turkish officials whom the Turkish state now finds unpalatable.

Enduring U.S.-Turkey Relations

As a longtime Ally and friend, we want Turkey to be the best democratic partner it can be. We have long supported – and will continue to support – democratic development there, because we believe that respect for the rule of law, judicial independence, and fundamental freedoms are sources of strength and expand our potential for partnership. We will also continue providing the assistance our imprisoned citizens and local employees need, and will not rest until all of their cases are resolved.

Members of the Commission, thank you for your attention today. I look forward to answering your questions.