

To:

The Honorable Senator Menendez

Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The Honorable Senator Risch

Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The Honorable Senator Reed

Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee

The Honorable Senator Inhofe

Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee

May 13, 2022

Dear Congressional Leaders:

On behalf of American Friends of Kurdistan, I am writing to express concern about reports that the U.S. Department of State is actively considering a request made by the Republic of Turkey to purchase 40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16 fighter jets and nearly 80 modernization kits for its existing enormous fleet of warplanes and the State Department's notice of pending Foreign Military Sales for air-to-air missiles and radar/avionics upgrades to Turkey.

Today, Turkey continues to violate the bipartisan Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) sanctions by purchasing Russian defense systems such as the S-400 missiles. As you are aware, these Russian systems are incompatible with NATO defense systems and against America's national security interests. To make matters worse, President Erdogan has publicly stated that his country intends to purchase more Russian missiles and is looking to jointly produce the next generation of defense systems with Russia.

Turkey has shown time and time again that it uses American-made weapons to threaten ethnic and religious minorities like the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, including the vulnerable Yazidi community in Sinjar, Iraq.

In Turkey, Erdogan's government consistently targets the Kurdish people by labeling them terrorists, preventing the Kurdish language from being taught in schools, imprisoning Kurdish journalists and academics, and is on the verge of banning the pro-Kurdish Peoples Democratic Party (HDP). The former HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtas has remained behind bars since 2016, and most recently, Osman Kavala, a Turkish businessman, philanthropist, and activist, was given a life sentence.

In northeast Syria, controlled by our partners, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), remains the most stable region in Syria. But this stability is constantly threatened due to Turkey's alliance with al Qaeda affiliated groups and Turkey's incursions into SDF-held territories. Such violations threaten the daily lives of civilians and American service members who are on the ground.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), the Turkish military has violated international borders by establishing permanent military bases and outposts. The daily lives of Kurdish villagers in the Kurdistan Region are in constant threat due to Turkish bombardment with American F-16 fighter jets.

I urge you to consider the long list of human rights violations before approving any arms sales to Turkey. I encourage you to set strict pre-conditions for such deals, such as the release of Selahattin Demirtas, Osman Kavala, and others in prison today. I urge you to ensure that Turkey does not use American weapons to expand its borders into northeast Syria and the Kurdistan Region. Turkey must demonstrate that it abides by international law and cannot get away with such violations simply because it is a NATO member. Turkey must no longer be able to abuse the NATO alliance for its own territorial and political ambitions.

Turkey's actions have not changed; therefore, the United States should not reward it with American weapons.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Diliman Abdulkader

President

American Friends of Kurdistan