



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

Turkey: Post-Election Human Rights and Strategies for Accountability

Wednesday, September 26, 2018

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

2325 Rayburn House Office Building

Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery

Good afternoon. On behalf of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, I welcome you to our briefing on human rights and strategies for accountability in Turkey post- the recent elections. I thank the panelists for their presence today.

Over the last couple of years the Commission has been tracking the increasing authoritarianism and deteriorating human rights situation in Turkey.

We are concerned and we have expressed that concern in a number of ways, including a previous briefing organized jointly with the Helsinki Commission in May 2017.

Since then, we have continued to receive reports from individuals with terrible stories of detention, imprisonment and torture. There is such fear that those who meet with us feel they cannot reveal the meetings publicly. They even decline to take the usual photo to commemorate having met with a Member of Congress.

As Co-Chairs we have spoken out on individual cases of unjust treatment like those of Andrew Brunson and NASA physicist Serkan Golge. We were thrilled when Taner Kılıç, the chair of Amnesty International in Turkey, was finally released after a long detention on baseless charges.

But as we will hear today, the situation is not improving. Over 50,000 people remain in pre-trial detention and President Erdogan continues to consolidate power at the expense of Turkish democracy.

So we look forward to hearing our panelists' recommendations for what more we in Congress can do to ensure accountability for the abuses that have already taken place and to prevent the situation from worsening.

And let me just note: Turkey has a past history of repression against minorities. I refer to the Armenian genocide. All of us want to avoid a repeat of this history.

Thank you.