

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We are writing to express grave concerns regarding President Erdogan and the Turkish government's alarming campaign of repression against LGBTQI+ people, human rights organizations, and advocates in a recent nationwide operation.

In recent years, we have witnessed an increasingly systematic effort to restrict the human rights and civic participation of LGBTQI+ people in Turkey. The Turkish government has invoked so-called "family values" and "public morality" to justify restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, while courts and prosecutors have increasingly relied on vague provisions concerning obscenity and public morality to target LGBTQI+ people, human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and journalists. Authorities have repeatedly banned and violently dispersed Pride gatherings, individuals have faced prosecution for defending human rights, and government officials have escalated anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric.

This latest crackdown represents a dangerous and significant escalation of that broader campaign. Since September 12, 2026, Turkish authorities have detained hundreds of people, raided the offices of longstanding and trusted HIV and LGBTQI+ civil society organizations, restricted access to websites and social media accounts, and pursued dissolution proceedings against human rights associations.¹ Leadership and staff of LGBTQI+ human rights organizations have been arrested under spurious charges. In addition, Turkish authorities recently detained at least 150 people who were protesting this most recent anti-LGBTQI+ crackdown.² Together, these developments mark a dangerous new phase in the Erdogan regime's efforts to use criminal law and the state apparatus to suppress legitimate human rights advocacy on behalf of the LGBTQI+ community.

The Turkish government's actions directly violate international human rights frameworks to which Turkey is a signatory, including the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the United States is party. They also are an affront to basic human dignity and the values expected of a fellow NATO member, an alliance founded on shared democratic principles, including individual liberty, human freedom, and the right to peaceful assembly.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/sep/17/turkey-raids-detains-dozens-crackdown-lgbtq-activists-journalists>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/15/world/lgbtq-arrests-turkish-authorities-detain-protests-intl>

These developments warrant an urgent diplomatic response from the United States to protect the rights of freedom of expression, association, and assembly for all Turkish citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We therefore urge you to use all available channels to raise these concerns directly with the Turkish government; press for the immediate release of those arrested and detained for their legitimate human rights activities; and ensure that the U.S. Embassy in Ankara closely monitors related judicial proceedings. We further urge the Department to press Turkish authorities to cease efforts to criminalize LGBTQI+ organizations and advocacy and to affirm the right of all people to peacefully assemble.

We also request an update on the Department's broader strategy for addressing human rights with the Turkish government. While the current crackdown on LGBTQI+ people and civil society demands urgent attention, it must be seen as part of a broader pattern of human rights violations and democratic backsliding in Turkey. We urge the Department to ensure that human rights are meaningfully integrated into all bilateral engagements and request a clear explanation of how the Department intends to do so.

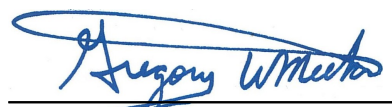
Defending the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals around the globe is imperative for international peace and stability, the flourishing of liberal democracy, and the protection of the rule of law. As you yourself have noted, "We should never, ever tolerate human rights violations against any person for their political views, their religious beliefs, or their sexual orientation."³ The United States must hold true to that principle in its engagement with the Turkish government.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your prompt response no later than October 30, 2026.

Sincerely,


Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress


Dina Titus
Member of Congress

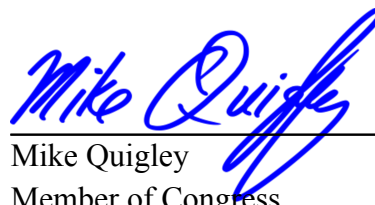

Gregory W. Meeks
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign
Affairs


Mark Takano
Member of Congress

³ <https://floridapolitics.com/archives/236744-marco-rubio-speaks-terror-gays-chechnya-ties-vladimir-putin/>



Nancy Pelosi
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



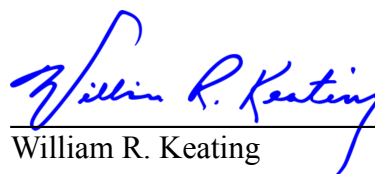
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Adenita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



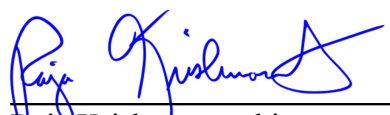
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



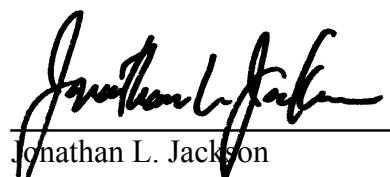
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



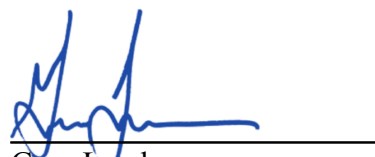
Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



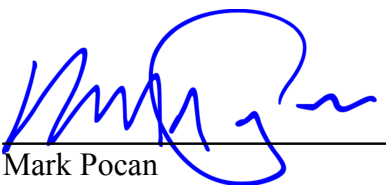
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



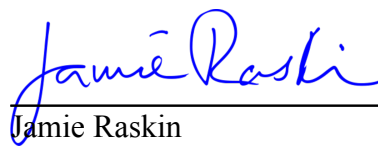
Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



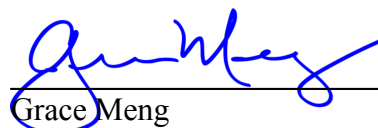
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



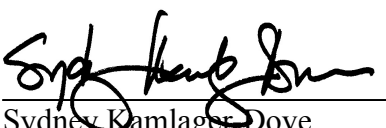
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



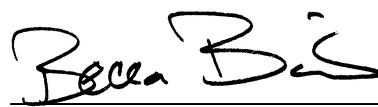
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



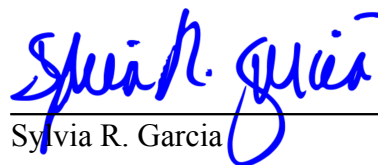
Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



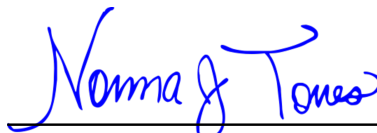
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Julie Johnson
Member of Congress



Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



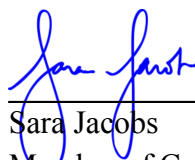
Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



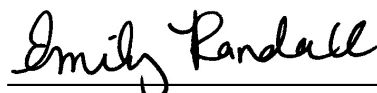
Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



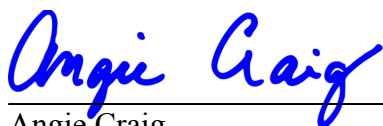
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress



Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
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Jerrold Nadler
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Joaquin Castro
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Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter, M.D.
Member of Congress



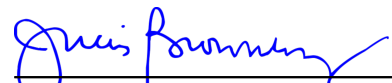
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



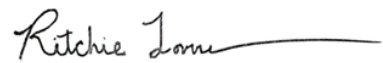
Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Everton Blair Jr.
Member of Congress



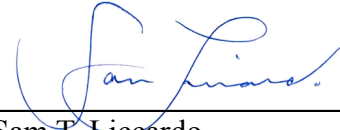
Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



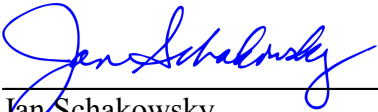
Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



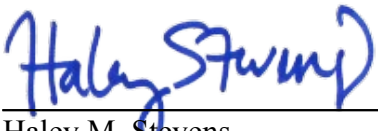
Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



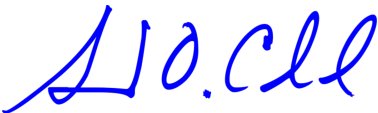
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



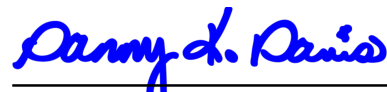
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



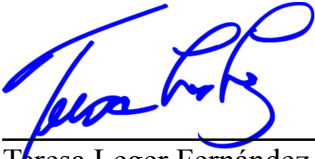
Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress