

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 13, 2014

His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey
c/o Embassy of Turkey to the United States
2525 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Prime Minister Erdoğan:

I write with great concern about your comments regarding Israel's recent actions in Gaza, and reports that organizations operating in Turkey are planning to breach Israel's naval blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza.

In response to thousands of rocket attacks on Israel launched by Hamas and other terrorist organizations from Gaza, Israel instituted a naval blockade to prevent items that could be used to support these attacks from entering Gaza by sea. The intent of the measures is to protect Israel, while still allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza. I encourage you to take all appropriate measures to keep these organizations from provoking a confrontation with Israeli forces and violating this blockade. A publicity stunt by Turkish organizations in 2010 led to the regrettable loss of life, and it would be irresponsible for your government not to take measures to avoid a similar outcome this time.

The United States has not forgotten how a centuries-old legacy of tolerance led to Turkey being the first Muslim-majority country to recognize the State of Israel in 1949. Your nation led the region, and much of the world, in acknowledging the right of the Jewish people to live in peace and security. The relationship between Turkey and Israel has historically been strong, and mutually advantageous. Although strained on the political level in recent years, economic interaction remains robust.

I was thus deeply troubled by your comments at a campaign event on August 3rd comparing Israel's recent actions to Nazi Germany's genocidal campaign against Jews and other minorities with the statement "Just like Hitler, who sought to establish a race free of all faults, Israel is chasing after the same target." Such deplorable comments and anti-Israel views have become increasingly common among senior Turkish officials and severely undermine our mutual interest in collaboration to address the common challenges our nations face.

Given our nations' long-standing partnership, and Turkey's significant role in NATO, I urge you to halt this incendiary rhetoric regarding Israel. Additionally, I request that you take all appropriate measures to keep organizations operating in Turkey from provoking a confrontation with Israeli forces by attempting to breach Israel's naval blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MR', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Marco Rubio
United States Senator