

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 26, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to strongly urge you to take decisive action to hold the Republic of Turkey accountable for its role in supporting and facilitating the operations of Hamas. We applaud President Biden's unequivocal support for Israel since Hamas launched its unprecedented attack and urge the United States government to employ the full spectrum of its diplomatic and national security tools to sever any political, logistical, and financial links between Turkey and Hamas that enable Hamas to commit atrocious acts of terrorism against Israel. Accordingly, we urge you to demand that Turkey act against Hamas immediately and without equivocation.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a barbaric, unprecedented attack on Israel. During these attacks, Hamas has brutalized, kidnapped, and killed thousands of people, including Americans. Hamas terrorists raped and murdered women next to their loved ones and went door-to-door systematically murdering innocent civilians, including infants. The harrowing accounts of such atrocities must not go unanswered.

The longstanding political, logistical, and financial support provided by Turkey and President Erdogan to Hamas is well-known and a matter of grave concern.

Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) maintains ideological affiliations with the Muslim Brotherhood, from which Hamas emerged. Erdogan consistently espouses antisemitic rhetoric and overtly defends Hamas, including telling Prime Minister Netanyahu, "Hamas is not a terrorist organization."<sup>1</sup> During a 2017 conference in Istanbul where a Hamas leader promised Israel would "disappear from the world" and "be annihilated," Erdogan stated, "those who think they own Jerusalem better know that tomorrow they will not even be able to hide behind trees," invoking antisemitic language from Hamas's organizational charter.<sup>2</sup>

Turkey's support for Hamas extends beyond rhetoric, a matter that has not received adequate attention from the United States. For over a decade, President Erdogan has made Turkey a

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<sup>1</sup> Munyar, Vahap. "Hamas Is Not a Terrorist Group: President Erdoğan." *Hürriyet Daily News*, 17 May 2017, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/hamas-is-not-a-terrorist-group-president-erdogan-131933>.

<sup>2</sup> "Turkey's Erdoğan Issues a Veiled Threat of Killing Each and Every Jew amid Jerusalem Tension." *Stockholm Center for Freedom*, 11 Dec. 2017, <https://stockholmcfr.org/turkeys-erdogan-issues-a-veiled-threat-of-killing-each-and-every-jew-amid-jerusalem-tension/>.

sanctuary for Hamas, with experts describing it as “the second-largest Hamas base after Gaza.”<sup>3</sup> Since 2012, Turkey has hosted Hamas’s military wing in Istanbul. Saleh al-Arouri, Hamas’s second-in-command, has publicly praised Hamas’s attack and has been at the helm of Hamas’s operations in Istanbul since its inception. Al-Arouri is infamous for his admission of responsibility for the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens in June 2014. Additionally, Zaher Jabarin, the head of Hamas’s Finance Bureau, works at the Istanbul office where he directs and funds Hamas terror operations in Israel. Jihad Yaghmour, another of Hamas’s representatives in Turkey, manages terrorist units throughout Judea and Samaria, helps establish non-governmental organizations as fronts for Hamas, and serves as a liaison to the Turkish government and its intelligence service.<sup>4</sup>

Israel's internal security service, Shin Bet, has documented how Hamas’s Istanbul office has facilitated the transfer of millions of dollars to support Hamas operatives and has directed numerous terrorist attacks against Israel.<sup>5</sup> Under al-Arouri’s leadership, the Istanbul office has functioned as a crucial hub for strengthening Hamas’s capacity to launch attacks against Israel. It provides training for Hamas operatives, engages in money laundering through Turkish financial institutions, and facilitates the infiltration of terrorists into Israeli territory. The Istanbul operation has been linked to multiple terror attacks against Israel, including the June 2014 kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens, the murder of an Israeli couple in the West Bank in front of their four children, and a thwarted assassination attempt on the former mayor of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>

Despite Hamas’s involvement in the murder of innocent Israelis, Turkey and President Erdogan have embraced Hamas with open arms. Over the years, Erdogan and Turkish government officials have frequently met with senior Hamas leadership. In August 2020, Erdogan and the head of the Turkish intelligence service held meetings with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and al-Arouri, both of whom have been designated as Specially Designated Global Terrorists by the United States.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the Turkish government has granted citizenship and issued passports to Hamas operatives, facilitating their ability to move freely throughout the region and plan terrorist operations. This includes al-Arouri, who is subject to a \$5 million bounty by the U.S. Department of State’s Rewards for Justice Program.<sup>8</sup> Despite his bounty, the Turkish government has not taken measures to restrict his international travel.

Apart from diplomatic and political support, Turkey has been a source of financial and material assistance to Hamas. The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control

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<sup>3</sup> McKay, Hollie. “Israel Claims Turkey Is Granting Passports to Hamas Members.” Fox News, 28 Aug. 2020, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/turkey-reported-to-be-issuing-citizenship-to-hamas-members-but-support-for-the-terror-group-goes-back-years.amp>.

<sup>4</sup> Shragai, Nadav. “Hamas’ Istanbul Headquarters Has Directed Hundreds of Terror Attacks Against Israelis and Laundered Millions of Dollars.” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 30 Dec. 2021, [https://jcpa.org/article/hamas-istanbul-headquarters-has-directed-hundreds-of-terror-attacks-against-israelis-and-laundered-millions-of-dollars/#\\_edn2](https://jcpa.org/article/hamas-istanbul-headquarters-has-directed-hundreds-of-terror-attacks-against-israelis-and-laundered-millions-of-dollars/#_edn2).

<sup>5</sup> Menachem, Yoni Ben. “Turkey’s Role in Hamas Terror.” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 7 May 2018, <https://jcpa.org/turkeys-role-in-hamas-terror/>.

<sup>6</sup> Sanchez, Raf. “Exclusive: Hamas Plots Attacks on Israel from Turkey as Erdogan Turns Blind Eye.” The Telegraph, 17 Dec. 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/12/17/hamas-plots-attacks-israel-turkey-erdogan-turns-blind-eye/>.

<sup>7</sup> Naar, Ismaeel. “Erdogan Meets with Hamas Leaders despite \$5 Mln US Bounties, Terror Designations.” Alarabiya News, 24 Aug. 2020, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2020/08/24/Erdogan-meets-with-Hamas-leaders-despite-5-mln-US-bounty-terror-designations.>; Ortagus, Morgan. “President Erdogan’s Meeting With Hamas Leadership.” United States Department of State, 25 Aug. 2020, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/president-erdogans-meeting-with-hamas-leadership/>.

<sup>8</sup> “Salih Al-Aruri – Rewards For Justice.” Rewards For Justice – Stop a Terrorist and Save Lives, <https://rewardsforjustice.net/rewards/salih-al-aruri/#:~:text=About,Brigades%2C%20Hamas%20military%20wing>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2023.

(OFAC) has imposed sanctions on several Turkish-based individuals and entities that have provided financial and travel facilitation services to various jihadist groups, including Hamas, the Islamic State, and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.<sup>9</sup> In 2020, a U.S. judge ruled that a case against Turkey's Kuveyt Turk Bank for aiding and abetting Hamas could proceed.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, last month Israel disclosed the discovery of 16 tons of materials for rocket production, originating from Turkey and en route to Gaza. These materials, which included ammonium chloride, a dual-use substance Hamas has used for constructing rockets they launch at Israel, further underscores the urgency of addressing Turkey's involvement in these operations.<sup>11</sup> In both cases, Turkey's direct role remains unclear. Nevertheless, whether Turkey is directly involved or deliberately ignorant of these activities, it is inexcusable, and Turkey should be held to the same standard as other allies when it comes to accountability for enabling such operations within its territory.

The recent attack on Israel, the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, serves as a stark reminder of the lengths to which Hamas will go to achieve its objectives. In recognition of our enduring commitment to Israel's security, it is our moral and strategic duty to utilize every available tool to sever any political, logistical, and financial links that empower Hamas. Accordingly, we request that the U.S. Department of State demand that the Turkish government:

1. Formally designate Hamas as a terrorist organization;
2. Close Hamas's office in Istanbul and any affiliated entities operating in Turkey;
3. Revoke Turkish citizenship and confiscate Turkish passports from all Hamas officials within Turkey;
4. Expel Hamas officials from the country and prohibit their re-entry;
5. Investigate whether any Turkish banks are implicated in the financing of Hamas, report the findings of such an investigation to the U.S. Department of State, and sanction any banks involved in such financing; and
6. Investigate whether any Turkish officials were involved in Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel and report said findings to the U.S. Department of State.

We appreciate your dedication to ensuring Israel's security and the well-being of its people. Thank you for your consideration of these important matters.

Sincerely,



Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress

Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress

<sup>9</sup> Erdemir, Aykan. "Treasury Sanctions Jihadist Financiers in Turkey for the Seventh Time Since 2019." Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 17 Sept. 2021, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/09/17/jihadist-financiers-in-turkey/>.

<sup>10</sup> Henkin et al v. Kuveyt Turk Katilim Bankasi A.S., No. 1:2019cv05394 - Document 27 (E.D.N.Y. 2020), <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/new-york/nyedce/1:2019cv05394/439021/27/>.

<sup>11</sup> al-Mughrabi, Nidal, and Henriette Chacar. "Israel Says It Found 16 Tons of Rocket-Making Substance Headed from Turkey to Gaza." Reuters, 14 Sept. 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-it-found-16-tons-rocket-making-substance-headed-turkey-gaza-2023-09-14/>.

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