

Fiscal: No Fiscal Impact

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 06/23/15

Action: Be Adopted.

Meeting Dates: 06/23

Vote:

Yeas: 4 - Boquist, Burdick, Ferrioli, Rosenbaum

Exc: 1 - Beyer

Prepared By: Erin Seiler, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Urges Congress to work with Turkish diplomats, European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies to stop mass arrests and detainment of journalists in Turkey.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Importance of free speech in democracy
- Jailing of Turkish journalists
- Turkey's role as ally and member of NATO

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

House Joint Memorial 16 urges Congress of the United States and the United States Department of State to work with Turkish diplomats, the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies to remove recent judicial laws signed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that have led to the mass arrest and detainment of journalists in Turkey.

Recently, new laws passed by the Turkish Parliament allow search of individuals, vehicles and homes and seizure of property based on suspicion of crimes against the government such as establishing, heading or being a member of a terrorist organization or trying to seize control of the state. As a result of the new laws, there has been an increase in the arrests and detainment of newspaper journalists, television producers and script writers who are seen as reporting on information critical of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government. Amongst those arrested were Ekrem Dumanli, editor-in-chief of the Zaman daily newspaper and Samanyolu Broadcasting Group General Manager, Hidayet Karaca.

The targeted detainment of journalists is at odds with Turkish constitutional principles and creates a more authoritarian government; undermines principles of free speech, which are the cornerstone of democratic societies supporting freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on January 15, 2015, on freedom of expression in Turkey, criticizing police raids and detention of journalists and stating that there is a "diminishing tolerance of public protest and critical media" in Turkey. As a close ally to the United States, it is important to maintain a strong relationship between Turkey and the international community, especially during these times when stability and adherence to democratic principles are vital.