

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 5, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write to express my strong support for our Kurdish partners in Syria and encourage your attention to the United States' relationship with these partners. March marked the 10th anniversary of the Syrian War and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) subsequent rise. While I have been critical of military action undertaken without sufficient Congressional authorization, I want to be clear that my concerns about inappropriate uses of outdated Authorizations for the Use of Military Force on the part of U.S. policymakers do not diminish my appreciation for the Kurds, who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with U.S. Forces as part of a global coalition to stop the spread of ISIS militants in Syria and the surrounding region.

After acknowledging the importance of the U.S.-Kurdish partnership in the fight against ISIS, the Trump administration did not hesitate to break America's solemn promise to the Kurds who had sacrificed so much on our behalf, emboldening Turkey to take military action, creating a humanitarian crisis that risked the release of ISIS prisoners and severely damaging our international credibility. After we moved to withdraw our troops from the Turkish border, the UN Secretary-General expressed great concern over this decision, further impacting U.S. standing in the international community and undermining regional security.

An opportunity exists to mend relationships, rally the international community and restore our foreign policy credibility. I was encouraged by your recent conversation with the Permanent Representatives to the UN Security Council, expressing the urgent need to take action on Syria. I ask that you also consider what independent action our Nation can take to support our Kurdish partners in Syria. Specifically, I ask you to consider the following recommendations:

- Direct foreign aid and humanitarian assistance to rebuild critical infrastructure devastated by ISIS and combat the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Publicly acknowledge Kurdish forces' sacrifices in fighting violent extremist organizations and provide special immigrant visas to Kurds who partnered with the United States in the fight against ISIS;
- Expeditiously review citizenship applications for Kurdish Green Card holders who assisted U.S. Forces from the Gulf War to present that were stalled during the Trump administration; and

- Demand Turkey curb its malign activities against Kurdish populations and urge the Erdogan government to fulfill its obligation as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to settle international disputes peacefully.

America is back, and diplomacy is once again at the center of our foreign policy. We must restore trust and confidence in our allies and partners to achieve our national objectives. I strongly believe in continuing this important tradition and stand ready to assist your administration on these crucial issues.

Sincerely,



TAMMY DUCKWORTH
UNITED STATES SENATOR