

P.O. Box 300  
Mannville, AB, T0B 2W0  
1-800-463-1194  
Tel : (780) 763-6130  
Fax : (780) 763-6132  
leon.benoit.c1@parl.gc.ca



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Suite 613, Justice Bldg  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6  
Tel: (613) 992-4171  
Fax: (613) 996-9011  
leon.benoit@parl.gc.ca

**LEON E. BENOIT, M.P.**  
**VEGREVILLE-WAINWRIGHT**

**OTTAWA**

21 April, 2015

The Hon. Robert Nicholson, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned, express our concern regarding the deteriorating state of press freedom and individual free expression in Turkey.

On December 14, 2014, prominent Turkish media outlets, known to be critical of the current Turkish government for alleged corruption, were raided and dozens of people including journalists, police officers and media workers were arrested and held with questionable charges on orders of the government. Among the arrested was Mr. Hidayet Karaca, President of Samanyolu Group – one of largest media groups in Turkey – who has been awaiting trial. Since then, efforts to harass and intimidate critical journalists have further escalated, several prominent journalists including Mr. Mehmet Baransu, columnist for Taraf daily, have been arrested and many others have faced political oppression. These events directly violate freedom of expression as well as freedom of the press, and threaten the democratic fundamentals that Turkey has been built upon.

In Canada, freedom of expression and freedom of the press are cherished by all people and by all governments. These are vital tools in the preservation of a free, open and democratic society in which the government is accountable to citizens – not themselves. The good people of Turkey, too, expect this free exchange of ideas without fear of persecution.

As a NATO ally, Canada values its partnership with a stable, democratic Turkey. There is great potential for further bilateral cooperation on issues of trade, investment and the development of natural resources. However, states that respect the rule of law and respect the rights of their citizens are more likely to benefit from foreign development. We urge the Turkish government to curb these heavy-handed measures as it works to diversify its markets and strives for greater European integration.

Turkey's democracy has overcome hurdles in the past, but it must swiftly move to right these current wrongs for the benefit of all Turkish citizens. President Erdoğan and the government of Turkey must restore the confidence of the international community and its citizens through a restored respect for freedom of the press and expression – essential democratic principles.

We urge you to pursue any means available to you that may press President Erdoğan and the government of Turkey to reach a peaceful, democratic, and long-term resolution to this ongoing and serious situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'LB', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Leon Benoit, M.P.  
Vegreville-Wainwright

**Please sign on the line:**

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**Please print name:**

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