

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 14, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our deep concern regarding Turkey's continuing efforts to open the coastline of Varosha, Cyprus in contravention of several United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions and in defiance of recent calls from the UNSC and European Council to immediately reverse course. We urge you to utilize both bilateral and multilateral channels to pressure Turkey to halt its provocations in Varosha and clearly articulate the consequences of its illegal actions.

After announcing his intentions to open the beach in Varosha in October 2020, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has initiated infrastructure projects to develop the fenced-off area of the coastline. In response, the UNSC issued a Presidential Statement calling on Turkey to cease its activities and reaffirming Resolution 550 (1984), which "considers attempts to settle any part of Varosha by people other than its inhabitants as inadmissible and calls for the transfer of that area to the administration of the United Nations." The European Union (EU) has also stepped up its pressure on Erdogan, issuing a statement on December 11, 2020 decrying Turkey's unilateral actions in Varosha. With Turkey's activities continuing unabated, the EU reaffirmed its position and called for the full respect of UNSC Resolutions in a statement on June 25, 2021. Such multilateral declarations send a strong rebuke and provide a basis upon which the United States can deepen efforts with the UN and EU to hold Turkey accountable.

Turkey's transgressions in Varosha come as it blocks progress in the United Nations' 5+1 Cyprus reunification talks. The Turkish Cypriots' proposal to establish two states in Cyprus at the most recent round in Geneva—the first since negotiations broke down in 2017—undermined prospects to reunify Cyprus as a bizonal, bicomunal federation, in accordance with UNSC Resolutions and long-standing policy. As further evidence of its unwillingness to seek a durable political settlement on the island, Turkey has reportedly established a base for unmanned aerial vehicles at Lefkoniko airport, in an effort to expand its military presence in Turkish-occupied Cyprus.

President Erdogan's plan to visit Turkish-occupied Cyprus on July 20, the anniversary of Turkey's illegal invasion of Cyprus, will only exacerbate an unacceptable situation. We urge you to work in tandem with the EU to make clear, in advance, that any attempt by Turkey to support the resettlement or reopening of Varosha will be met by multilateral sanctions. You have rightly centered U.S. foreign policy on principles of human rights and the rule of law. Any attempt by President Erdogan and Turkey to resettle or reopen Varosha would represent a gross violation of those principles. The U.S. and the EU should make clear to President Erdogan that continuing to violate UNSC Resolutions and the rule of law is unacceptable.

We thank you for your longstanding support for Cyprus and look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator