

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 257

Expressing the sense of the Senate concerning the arrest and continued detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu and urging the Government of Türkiye to uphold democratic values.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 22, 2025

Mr. SCHIFF (for himself and Mr. DURBIN) submitted the following resolution;
which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate concerning the arrest and continued detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu and urging the Government of Türkiye to uphold democratic values.

Whereas the Republic of Türkiye is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, an important ally of the United States, and, for many years, had been on a path to join the European Union, a process that involved important democratic and other reforms;

Whereas Ekrem İmamoğlu was elected as Mayor of Istanbul, Türkiye, in 2019, and was reelected in 2024;

Whereas Mr. İmamoğlu was widely seen as a likely opposition party candidate to compete in the 2028 Türkiye presidential election;

Whereas, on March 19, 2025, Turkish police detained Mr. İmamoğlu along with more than 100 other politicians, journalists, and businessmen;

Whereas, on March 23, 2025, Ekrem İmamoğlu was formally arrested and charged with corruption and terrorism charges, including establishing and managing a criminal organization, taking bribes, extortion, and aiding the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and was subsequently charged with threatening Istanbul Chief Prosecutor Akin Gürlek;

Whereas the Government of Türkiye has not provided any credible evidence to the public to support the charges against Mr. İmamoğlu;

Whereas widespread protests opposing the arrest and detention of Mr. İmamoğlu have erupted throughout Türkiye, constituting the largest anti-government protests in Türkiye since the Gezi Park protests in 2013;

Whereas numerous human rights and pro-democracy organizations and political figures in Türkiye have condemned the charges against Mr. İmamoğlu as baseless and politically motivated;

Whereas, on March 23, 2025, the Republican People's Party, the main opposition party in Türkiye, formally nominated Ekrem İmamoğlu as the party's candidate for president after receiving nearly 15,000,000 votes in the primary election;

Whereas, on April 11, 2025, Ekrem İmamoğlu appeared in court in Istanbul and denied all charges brought against him;

Whereas the Government of Türkiye, under the presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has engaged in actions that un-

dermine democracy and the rule of law, as evidenced in the Department of State’s 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, which states the Government of Türkiye—

(1) “restricted equal competition and placed restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression”; and

(2) “restricted the activities of opposition political parties, leaders, and officials, including through police detention”;

Whereas the leadership of the Government of Türkiye has been subject to numerous allegations of corruption since 2013;

Whereas May 19, 2025, marks 2 months since Ekrem İmamoğlu was arbitrarily detained in government custody;

Whereas, on March 19, 2025, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called the arrest of Mayor İmamoğlu “deeply concerning” and stated, “Türkiye must uphold the democratic values, especially the rights of elected officials”;

Whereas, on March 26, 2025, Elizabeth Throssell, a spokesperson for the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, referencing the March 19, 2025, arrests of protesters by the Turkish police, that all those detained “for the legitimate exercise of their rights must be released immediately and unconditionally” and that those facing charges “should be treated with dignity” and “their rights to due process and a fair trial, including access to a lawyer of their own choice, must be fully ensured”;

Whereas, on April 9, 2025, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called on the Government of Türkiye “to release immediately Ekrem İmamoğlu”; and

Whereas, on May 8, 2025, Turkish authorities blocked the social media account of Mayor İmamoğlu, preventing him from communicating with his supporters: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) calls on President Erdoğan and law enforce-
3 ment authorities in Türkiye to present any credible
4 evidence against Ekrem İmamoğlu or immediately
5 release him from detention;

6 (2) urges the Government of Türkiye to uphold
7 democratic values, including free and fair elections;
8 and

9 (3) urges the Secretary of State to issue force-
10 ful and timely statements and to engage diplomati-
11 cally with the Government of Türkiye over anti-
12 democratic behavior.

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