

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 26, 2018

The Honorable Donald Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Since the murderous Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad first attacked peaceful protesters in March 2011, more than 500,000 people have died and more than 11 million have been forced from their homes. These actions generated a humanitarian disaster and created a power vacuum filled by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. Through the actions of the U.S.-led international coalition, consisting of more than 75 partners, and the critical efforts of allies on the ground, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), we have nearly eradicated ISIS from the battlefield. Yet we fear that hastily removing U.S. forces from Syria would result in a strategic reversal for the United States and our allies and also lead to even greater humanitarian strife.

While U.S.-led forces regained most of the territory previously held by ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the threat posed by extremists in the region persists. Our presence remains critical to prevent the return of ISIS and ensure stability in eastern Syria. The SDF and local police forces do not have the capability to permanently hold and rebuild reclaimed territory on their own.

While the SDF has proven to be an effective fighting force, the Turkish military campaign against the Syrian Kurds has drawn SDF away from the anti-ISIS campaign. The continued presence of U.S. forces is vital to prevent Turkey from continuing its efforts against the Syrian Kurds and further disrupting international efforts to defeat ISIS. Furthermore, the void created by our absence would produce the conditions that would allow ISIS, or a similar terrorist group, to return to eastern Syria. Additionally, it would leave a strategic vacuum to be filled by Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia. This development would allow Moscow to expand its influence in the Middle East and would also permit Iran and Hezbollah free reign to menace our ally, Israel, enhance their sway in Iraq, and threaten longstanding U.S. partners such as Jordan.

It is for these reasons that we are very concerned with recent rhetoric concerning the swift withdrawal of United States forces from Syria. Simply, ending the U.S. presence in Syria while ISIS is on the verge of defeat would threaten U.S. interests and regional security. We respectfully ask you to sustain the U.S. force presence in Syria and work with Congress to formulate a comprehensive strategy to prevent the reemergence of ISIS, reduce the presence of Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia in the Levant, and facilitate a diplomatic resolution to the Syrian conflict.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lindsey Graham", with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Coons", with a stylized, cursive script.

Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marco Rubio", with a stylized, cursive script.

Marco A. Rubio  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Catherine Cortez Masto", with a stylized, cursive script.

Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Nelson", with a stylized, cursive script.

Bill Nelson  
United States Senator