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HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Members of AFET
CAF 09/07

Mr David Mc Allister MEP
European Parliament
Brussels

Dear David,

I would like to thank you for letter dated on 24 March 2018, regarding the ongoing detention of the two Greek soldiers in Turkey.

Indeed, the EU has been following the issue from the outset. A week after the arrest of the two Greek soldiers at the FAC/Defence, together with all 28 Defence Ministers, I expressed our solidarity with Greece and our hope for a swift and positive outcome.

Shortly before the Leaders' meeting, the European Council, in its conclusions of 22 March 2018, expressed its grave concern over the continued detention of EU citizens in Turkey, including the two Greek soldiers and recalled Turkey's obligation to respect international law and good neighbourly relations, and to normalise relations with all EU Member States. The issue was then discussed at length with the President of Turkey in Varna and the European Union called for a swift and positive resolution, underlining the importance of good neighbourly relations with EU Member States as an important commitment within the accession process.

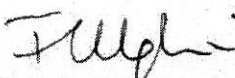
More recently, in its latest annual report on Turkey, adopted on 17 April 2018, the Commission recalled the aforementioned position of the European Council on the matter and urged Turkey to avoid any kind of threat or action directed against a Member State, or source of friction or actions that would damage good neighbourly relations and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Detentions of EU citizens create undesirable tensions with Member States and increase strains between Turkey and the European Union. It is therefore vital to continue showing solidarity with Greece and issuing concerted calls on the Turkish side for the immediate release of the soldiers, either publicly or in bilateral contacts. In this context, the importance of good neighbourly relations cannot be overstated, all the more so between two countries which are both neighbours and NATO allies.

Indeed, the European Parliament has added its voice and not only held a debate on the issue but also adopted a relevant resolution, calling on Turkish authorities to swiftly conclude the judicial process and release the soldiers. In this respect, your expression of the European Parliament's continued support is much appreciated.

Please rest assured that we will continue to follow the matter closely at all levels.

Yours sincerely,


Federica Mogherini