

**News and Current Events :: Please Remember the Brunsons****Please Remember the Brunsons, on: 2016/12/9 17:07**

Brothers and sisters I started a thread on the Brunson's about a week or so ago period but could not find it. This is the latest update from World Watch Monitor. Please keep this brother and his dear wife in your prayers.

UPDATE (9 Dec.): A Turkish judge sent Rev. Andrew Brunson to prison in Izmir today, 64 days after the US pastor and his wife, Norine, were detained on 7 Oct. under Interior Ministry deportation orders.

Although his wife was released on 19 Oct. and given an extended permit to remain in the country, Andrew Brunson has been held since 20 Oct. at the Harmandali Detention Centre on the northern edge of Izmir.

The 48-year-old was transferred overnight on 8 Dec. to a counter-terrorism centre, before being brought before an Izmir court today (9 Dec.) for interrogation.

The American Protestant heard today for the first time the allegations filed against him, which apparently prompted his arrest and lengthy detention. According to the officiating judge, the "terrorism" charges came from a "secret informant". The court ruled that the files on Brunson's case would continue to remain inaccessible to his lawyer, who had not been allowed to meet him until today's hearing.

According to Norine Brunson, the lawyer confirmed that her husband was accused of links with the Fetullah Gulen movement, which is accused by Ankara of instigating a failed military coup against the Turkish government on 15 July. The pastor is now incarcerated at Izmir's Sakran 3 Nolu T Tipi Prison.

In a wide-ranging crackdown to identify and prosecute the suspected coup plotters and their sympathisers, with the intention to prosecute them as "terrorists", the Turkish authorities have suspended or jailed tens of thousands of judges, prosecutors, military personnel, journalists and educators on terrorism charges over the past five months.

Brunson and his wife, who have three children now studying in the US, have lived in Turkey for the past 23 years.

**Re: American Missionary Sentenced to Prison in Turkey, on: 2016/12/9 17:56**

Brothers and sisters please keep this precious couple in your prayers. From what I understand Andrew Brunson is a gentle man who only wanted to see Turkish souls come to faith in Jesus Christ. He had no involvement in Turkish politics. And certainly the allegations of him being tied to Guillon are false.

They Turkish authorities have closed the case files to Andrew's lawyer. It seems that Erdogan's government is going to make an example of this dear brother. Because the United States will not extradite Guillon back to Turkey.

As God brings the Brunsons to your mind please keep them in your prayers and their church in Izmir Turkey. Also pray for the believers in Turkey as it appears that the Turkish government may start cracking down on the Christians there. Indeed these are dangerous times we are living in.

-bbs-

**Re: , on: 2016/12/9 18:19**

Saints please post this story on your social media websites that prayer be raised for this brother.

-bbs-

**Re: Thus from a brother in Turkey, on: 2016/12/10 3:46**

Hey Blaine,

Â I know a brother who is a missionary in Turkey & knows a lot of people both stateside & in the Middle East. I asked him if he was aware of this & he sent me this response:

"Yeah bro, it's sad. My friend tried to go visit him and nobody is allowed to see him. They are keeping him here.

Dear saints, please continue to keep the Brunson family in your prayers.

-bbs-

**Re: , on: 2016/12/11 7:37**

Colossians 4:18

...Remember my imprisonment...

Hebrews 13:3

...Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill treated, since you yourselves also are in the body...

Brothers and sisters the Brunson have been told that they have been forgotten by their government. But have they been forgotten by the body of Christ? Is anyone remembering this dear couple in their prayers?

Just wondering?

-bbs-

**Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2016/12/11 10:45**

Blaine,

Thank you for bringing this for our attention and prayers.

**Re: , on: 2016/12/11 14:38**

Thank you Blain for the reports and updates.

Will regularly pray for them.

May the Lord be near to them in those difficult times and may He intervene supernaturally.

**Re: Mark & Dave , on: 2016/12/11 15:40**

Thank you both for your prayers for this dear couple. I will post continuing updates as I get them.

Bro Blaine

**Re: - posted by SherlockA (), on: 2016/12/11 19:45**

Thanks for the update bro Blaine. We'll do keep them in our personal and congregational prayers.

**Re: Sherlock , on: 2016/12/12 9:52**

Thank you dear brother. May this couple feel your prayers and those other prayers that saints are praying for them.

-Bro Blaine-

**Re: American Missionary Sentenced to Prison in Turkey - posted by leyoung (), on: 2016/12/12 10:41**

Praying, brother. The least I can do. May God strengthen the brothers and sisters in Christ in Turkey.

Once again the letter to the Ephesians strikes home in the place where God sent it!

In Christ,

Sister Leslie

**Re: Leslie, on: 2016/12/12 14:30**

My dear sister prayer is the least that you can do for the persecuted but also the most powerful thing you can do.

Thank you so much for lifting this precious couple up in your prayers.

-bro blaine-

**Re: Latest Update on Andrew Bronsun , on: 2016/12/12 16:44**

We need your prayers! Andrew was moved in the night of Thursday night to the Counter Terrorist Dept. Then taken to court in the morning and falsely charged with, "membership in an armed terrorist organization," with no evidence provided. The judge sent him to prison to await further Court proceedings. I don't know when I will be able to see him as this prison is very strict. Needless to say, this is a blow. God can still get him back for Christmas, Even on the 12th, but right now we need your prayers more than ever.

From Norine Bronsun's Facebook post.

-bro blaine-

**Re: Facebook post from Norine Brunson regarding Andrew 12/12/16, on: 2016/12/13 9:28**

Dear praying friends,

Today the lawyer tried to access Andrew's file, now that he has been officially charged. It was confirmed that a decision was taken to keep the file sealed. How can the lawyer prepare a defense??!!!

Well, December 12, has come and gone for us. We had cautious optimism for today, and I am guessing Andrew is feeling sick at heart with hope deferred. Our next hope is for Christmas break so we can be reunited with our kids.

It's time, for a sound of praise, a concert of prayer, and the words of praise to open up prison doors. Someone gave us this word. So praise, pray, and worship for Turkey.

-bro blaine-

**Re: , on: 2016/12/14 5:45**

This morning I was praying for the Brunson's. As always in praying for the persecuted I struggle in terms of what the pray for them. I know in my heart what I want want to cry out for. My heart would want to cry out for Andrew's release. But then is this what God desires?

As I inquired of the Spirit in terms of how I should pray for the Brunsons. The Spirit simply spoke. Pray that "they would be faithful."

After that what more can be said? Or what more can be prayed?

-bro blaine-

**Re: Article on Andrew Bronson , on: 2016/12/15 2:44**

From Voice of the Persecuted

#### RAISE YOUR VOICE

An American pastor, Andrew Brunson, has been falsely charged with membership in an armed terrorist organization. Turkey has imprisoned this American pastor without any evidence. He has been a Christian pastor in Turkey for the past 23 years.

We are representing the family of this American Pastor who is facing grave danger in a Turkish prison where he is being held simply because of his Christian beliefs. The government of Turkey led by an Islamic party has begun increased crackdowns on Christians, and Pastor Andrew, if convicted, may face years in prison based on extremely serious and false charges. We are launching a global campaign to call attention to his plight demanding that Turkey a NATO member release Pastor Andrew without delay.

Pastor Andrew Brunson a U.S. citizen from Black Mountain, North Carolina was summoned to the local police station in Izmir, Turkey on the morning of October 7, 2016. He believed he would be receiving a long awaited permanent residence card. Pastor Brunson, who is a U.S. citizen, has been living in Turkey for 23 years, running a Christian church with the full knowledge of local authorities.

Upon arriving at the station, he was informed he was being deported based on being a threat to national security, a common excuse for deportation in Turkey. It became clear that he was being arrested and would be detained until deportation. He was fingerprinted, searched, and had his phone, pen, etc. taken away. He was denied a Bible. But instead of being deported, he was held with no charges for 63 days, during which time he was denied access to his Turkish attorney. He was placed in solitary confinement for part of this time, with his glasses and watch confiscated.

Then on December 8th, after being detained for 63 days, things took a dire turn. In the middle of the night, Pastor Andrew was taken to a counter terrorism center in Izmir and then on to court. He was questioned and has been falsely charged with membership in an armed terrorist organization. The charging documents state no evidence has been gathered against him. A Turkish judge had the option to deport Pastor Andrew, release him on weekly sign-ins at the local police station, or imprison him. The judge chose to remand Pastor Andrew to prison.

Pastor Andrew has quietly and faithfully pastored churches in Turkey for over 23 years. He has raised his family in Turkey. He has dedicated his life in service to the people of Turkey, who he loves. He has never been a member of an armed terrorist organization. He is awaiting trial, and if convicted under these false charges, could face years of imprisonment, even though his Turkish attorney cannot review his case file. He is in great danger.

We have mobilized our international offices, working with the U.S. State Department to free this U.S. pastor once and for all.

As we approach Christmas a season of hope and promise we know that people around the world will stand with Pastor Andrew will be Pastor Andrew's voice supporting his fight for freedom and will join us in urging Turkey to release him immediately.

His Turkish attorney is planning to file an appeal in 2 days. Pastor Andrew urgently needs your voice now.

Join the international legal advocacy effort and be heard. Demand American Pastor Andrew's freedom today.

VOP note: Keep pressing in! Remember Andrew in your daily prayers. #NotForgotten

**Re: Clarification , on: 2016/12/15 11:34**

The previous post from Voice of the Persecuted is actually an article by ACLJ. Just wanted to clarify.

-bro blaine-

**Re: Tuesday, 12/20/16, on: 2016/12/20 7:08**

Brothers and Sisters,

There's something about the imprisonment of this dear brother, Andrew Bronson, that resonates in my soul. As one who has prayed for the persecuted for many years. The plight of this brother cuts deeply into my heart. When I read this Facebook pages that are sent to me from this dear wife. My heart is so gripped by the sorrow she must feel.

One Facebook page from sister Norine, Andrew's wife, said that she had not received a letter from her husband and over 70 days. She said the clothes and books she attempted to send to him in prison were returned. She was told such items were not allowed to be given to prisoners.

Dear saints keep in mind that Andrew has even been denied access to a Bible. Even American prisoners if they so choose can have a Bible. But this dear brother imprisoned in a Turkish prison for serving Christ cannot even have access to a Bible, to clean clothes, or possibly even to receive letters from his dear wife. Sister Norine does not know if even her letters are getting through to Andrew. Though she writes him on a daily basis.

There is something about the imprisonment of this brother that pierces my heart. Though I've prayed for the persecuted for many years. Though I've shed tears for them. There's something about this brother's imprisonment that causes more tears to flow out of my eyes.

I know the general scriptures and the things to pray for the persecuted on a daily basis. But somehow my prayers just don't touch the surface of what does brother must be enduring. I sense in my spirit that his dear wife is grieving and working through the process that she may never see her husband again.

It must be particularly hard as this is Christmas. This may be the first Christmas that this precious couple has spent apart. And the circumstances in which they are separated. The circumstances in which her dear husband has been snatched away Satan and put in prison.

The Turkish government has given hints that this man will never be set free and see the light of day. The enemy must be speaking into Andrew and Norine's minds that Andrew will be forgotten. Indeed Andrew Brunson may become the American version of Raoul Wallenberg.

As I prayed for them this morning though God reminded me the Andrew is surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. This brother is not forgotten by God. The same God that's just an Richard work and John Bunyan. This same God will also sustain Andrew Brunson. The Lord speaks to my heart and says pray for His grace for both Andrew and Norine that they will endure this trial.

I remember hearing the story of a precious sister imprisoned in North Korea. By the grace of God she was able to escape North Korea and the death camp where she had been imprisoned. When asked how she endured her imprisonment. Her response was, "I heard the prayers of the saints."

Brothers and sisters I have heard this testimony from accounts I have read about the persecuted. Somehow in the spirit those in prison and in the death camps know they are being prayed for my other brothers and sisters.

Dear saints would you please remember the persecuted in your prayers this Christmas. Would you please remember the Brunsons in the trial they are enduring in Turkey.

In tears from the foot of His cross.

Bro Blaine

**Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2016/12/20 9:42**

Brother, this really is disturbing and perplexing. I travel quite frequently to Turkey for business reasons and although I have seen the political atmosphere changing rapidly in recent years it still seems odd that this Pastor can disappear into the prison system without any news or voices raised from the diplomats and church leaders based in Turkey.

Turkey is not as yet a North Korea or even like Pakistan. There are still churches operating openly in Turkey I believe and in fact there seem to be some in the city of Izmir. So I wonder why these churches and pastors are not involved in finding out what the situation is. Maybe as the country is still under 'emergency powers' the government can do whatever it wants as people are too frightened to speak up.

We should keep praying, but it would be good if there could be some contact and feedback from believers in Turkey if possible.

**Re: Dave , on: 2016/12/20 10:25**

Brother my understanding is there have been those in the Turkish evangelical community who have raised concerns over the imprisonment of Andrew Brunson. There have even been those in the Turkish Parliament who have inquired of the government as to why this man has been imprisoned. The Turkish government has not given any answers

However since Erdogan has emerged as the strong man, opposition to him has been silenced. Journalists and others who have spoken out against him have been imprisoned. Watchers have said that Turkey has imprisoned more journalists than any country on the face of the Earth. That would include nations such as North Korea and Eritrea.

Observers have said that Turkey, once governed by the democratic secular principles of Kemal Ataturk, is shifting toward an Islamic dictatorship. Much of what you see in the Central Asian republics. And there is Erdogan's dream of re-establishing the Ottoman Caliphate. Preferably with him as the Caliph. At least in his own eyes.

How all of this will play out for the Turkish Christians and the imprisonment of Andrew Bronson? Only God knows. But it could be that people are afraid to speak out since it will be construed as opposition to Erdogan. And that could very well land one in prison.

Dave please be careful in your travels to Turkey. I get the impression that westerners are not welcome in that nation. And for sure let us keep Andrew Bronson and the other Turkish Christians in our prayers.

These are simply my thoughts. Since you travel to Turkey you may have a greater understanding of what is happening over there. I certainly welcome your thoughts.

Bro Blaine

**Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2016/12/20 10:32**

Blaine,

Thanks for the information. Yes I agree with your assessment of the situation. Sad thing is many of the citizens of that country are not happy with the situation, but due to the very recent events most will just keep quiet, because as you say they could be arrested on jumped up charges like the many thousands that have already.

**Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2016/12/20 12:55**

We as a country America made a grave error with Iran when the unfortunate timing of monies were given back to that rogue nation and the release of not only our sailors but also several American citizens were released had the wrong timing. This has made a way for countries like Turkey to politicize actions in order to achieve what they want which is to extradite the cleric they said attempted the coup and as I understand resides somewhere in The U S. I believe in light of the recent assassination of that Russian diplomats and the upcoming talks between Russia and Turkey, it is evident that The U S has lost its position of major influence in that region of the world. I believe our politicians lack the skills and motivation necessary to handle such circumstances on behalf of its citizenry, all that said The Word of God does declare that the heart of the king is in the hand of God and like the rivers of water He turns what ever way He wills. I will join you all in asking The Lord for favor in the sight of our brothers judges and that The Lord, The great judge over all to have mercy on this brother and release him from those bonds.

**Re: Dave and Tim , on: 2016/12/20 13:09**

So agree my brothers. Will definitely be in prayer for this brother and those in Turkey.

Bro Blaine

**Re: Recent Article on Imprisoned Andrew Brunson , on: 2016/12/24 14:12**

Posted on The Blaze

Erdogan issues Christmas message while American pastor rots in jail in Turkey.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan wished Christian citizens in Turkey a Christmas message of hope Saturday, even as North Carolina pastor Andrew Brunson sits falsely imprisoned in the near-Middle Eastern country.

Erdogan's message was released by his press office and attempted to sell the idea that Turkey is a nation of tolerance that welcomes and enables different traditions and beliefs. According to Turkish media outlet Andalou Agency, Erdogan believes that Turkey is a safe haven for repressed Christians and a place where they can live in peace:

"We, the members of this deep-rooted tradition, continue to embrace all the oppressed who have escaped war, oppression, and pressure," the president.

His message stands in stark contrast to the stories of American pastors who have been leading congregations in Turkey, but who have faced persecution and imprisonment over the last few months as Turkey has grown increasingly anti-American.

Brunson, pastor of the Izmir Resurrection Church on the west coast of Turkey, has been sitting in a Turkish prison since early December for alleged ties to the Gülen movement, which Erdogan blames for being behind the attempted military coup in July and responsible for the recent assassination of the Russian ambassador in Ankara.

Christianity Today reports that the reprisals against Christians in Turkey is growing as fast as the anti-Gülenist movement:

The Gülen movement's inspiration and namesake, influential cleric and political activist Fethullah Gülen, lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania, and American authorities refuse to extradite him. The current treatment of American evangelicals in the wake of the failed coup is seen as retaliation, according to Armenian members of Turkey's parliament.

"Protestant or Christian churches are seen as an American influence, and now that Turkey is anti-American, they are being targeted even more," Aykan Erdemir, senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a former member of the Turkish parliament, told Religion News Service.

The American Center for Law and Justice has taken up Brunson's cause and is working to secure his release.

"As we approach Christmas—a season of hope and promise—we know that people around the world will stand with Pastor Andrew," will be Pastor Andrew's voice—supporting his fight for freedom, and will join us in urging Turkey to release him immediately," said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the ACLJ.

Non-Muslims comprise about one percent of the population in Turkey.

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Please let us remember this brother and his family in our prayers. Let us remember the Believers in Turkey in our prayers.

Only God knows how this will play out.

Bro Blaine

**Re: Latest Update on Andrew Brunson, on: 2016/12/30 18:51**

Fact Check: American Pastor Andrew Brunson is not being held with ISIS terrorists

(Voice of the Persecuted) Andrew Brunson has been imprisoned and falsely charged with being a threat to Turkey's national security. More recent reports have shared that Brunson is in grave danger and is being kept with ISIS fighters and Afghani rebels. His wife has confirmed the claim is false.

I want to clarify that Andrew is NOT being held with violent people in prison. He is in a room with 11 Muslims who are very devout so prayers are always going on in the small room. But these are not violent people and he is not in danger from them. They all sleep in bunks in a fairly tight space, and eat the meals in another room and have a small courtyard to go out to. I believe they are kept separate from everyone else.

The Brunsons have lived, including raising their children, in Turkey for 23 years. Andrew was a pastor at the Resurrection Church in Izmir before the couple was detained on 7 Oct. under Interior Ministry deportation orders.

During a trial on Dec. 9, Rev. Brunson was accused of being linked with a terrorist movement. He was then taken to Izmir's Sakran 3 Nolu T Tipi Prison.

According to the ACLJ, Andrew was allowed to visit with family on Wednesday, and allowed to have a New Testament Bible which was previously denied. He was also given some access to his attorney, and has a visit scheduled for Friday with U.S. Embassy Officials. Yesterday, Pastor Andrew appealed his imprisonment, and was denied. Another appeal to a higher court is allowed, but it is uncertain how that appeal process will go. Due to an emergency decree in Turkey, those visits are recorded and any notes taken by his attorney are copied. Thus, Pastor Andrew has no attorney-client privilege.

"Pastor Andrew must be released," said the ACLJ in a statement. "We are continuing our diplomatic efforts to engage the incoming U.S. administration, and moving forward with an appeal of his case."

Harsh comments pertaining to this case are being shared on social media. We in the West often voice our opinions without any thought as to how our words may negatively affect persecuted Christians. Mrs. Brunson has asked that we remain respectful.

Please pray that the Lord control the media: we do love the country of Turkey and pray for its blessing and urge that social media be kept respectful. There is no need to be aggressive. We are only looking for Andrew to be reunited with our children at Christmas. Please pray also that the court realize that the charges are clearly false.

Let us not take on a contemptuous attitude, but see the opportunity the Lord has given our brother Andrew. 11 men are in his midst who need to hear the life saving message of the Gospel. Let us praise God for this faithful brother and the position he is in.

Let us read in Acts 16 and be encouraged as we remember Paul and Silas imprisonment.

22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. 23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and



fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; 26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. 27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" 29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

#### The Jailer Converted

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. 33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. 34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." 36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." 38 The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, 39 and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. 40 They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Colossians 4 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

7 As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. 8 For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. He will inform you about the whole situation here.

10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); 11 and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. 16 When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. 17 Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

May we stay in prayer and remember the same God who loved our early church brethren loves us and is with Andrew right now!

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. John 16:33

Please keep Pastor Andrew and his family in your prayers.

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Brothers and sisters please pray that Andrew Brunson will be a light to those Muslims that he is imprisoned with. For God has placed our brother in a strategic position to reach those Muslims who are in darkness.

Also let us praise God that he has access now to a New Testament. Also access to his attorney.

Let us also call out to God for our brother's freedom. That God will set him free when the purposes of Christ are fulfilled in that prison.

Because of Him.

Bro Blaine

**Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2017/1/20 6:42**

I just read this latest on the AI monitor news website on Andrew Brunson. Seems they maybe linking the extradition of Gulen to the release of Andrew.

Turkey's Prime Minister Binali Yildirim called on US President-elect Donald Trump today to extradite Fethullah Gulen, the Pennsylvania-based Sunni cleric who was named as the mastermind of the July 15 coup attempt. Yildirim told a news conference that Gulen's delivery to the Turkish authorities would help improve stormy relations between the two NATO allies.

Yet just as Gulen's presence in the United States remains a thorn in Turkish-US ties, so too is the incarceration of American Pastor Andrew Brunson, whose case has gone largely unnoticed in Turkey, but not in the United States. Turkish officials who spoke on strict condition of anonymity told AI-Monitor that they had been flooded with letters about Brunson's plight, including many from Congress. In a stiff editorial for Fox News, Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma aired their concerns, saying that Turkey had yet to provide compelling evidence of the pastor's guilt. Lankford said he had met with Turkish Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag last month to discuss Brunson's case, but the situation remains bleak.

Brunson, who led a small flock of Protestants in the western port city of Izmir for more than 20 years, was detained Oct. 17 with his wife Norine and held incommunicado until her release 13 days later. At an initial hearing Dec. 9, Brunson was charged with membership in an armed terrorist organization, and the officiating judge mentioned Gulen. Brunson continues to be held at the Sakran detention facility in Izmir and his lawyer is being denied access to his file. The terrorism charges against the pastor were based on a tip from a secret informant, the judge said. Sources familiar with the case speaking on condition that they not be identified by name told AI-Monitor that the informant was an individual who had accompanied Brunson on a recent trip to the mainly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, where they had a falling out. Brunson's longtime friend and fellow Pastor Ahmet Guvener of the Diyarbakir Evangelical Church expressed doubt about this story in a Skype interview with AI-Monitor, saying, "I have known Andrew for 20 years. He is an extremely peaceful God-fearing man. It's unthinkable that he would quarrel with anyone. And it's unthinkable that he would have links with this or that terrorist organization."

Pressure on missionaries is nothing new in Turkey. They were formally branded threats to national security until the ruling Justice and Development Party took power in 2002 and launched a raft of sweeping reforms aimed at winning membership to the European Union. They included restituting properties seized from the Armenian and Greek Orthodox churches and allowing Protestants to open at least 15 houses of worship. In 2015, the Great Synagogue in the Thracian city of Edirne was reopened upon completion of a five-year restoration project financed by the government. To be sure, the AKP has been credited with doing more for non-Muslim communities than any of its predecessors. But the mood has turned ugly since the July 15 coup. Tens of thousands of people have been arrested on often thinly supported accusations of ties to Gulen and countless likely innocents like Brunson have been caught in the net. Guvener said he would be demanding police protection for Sunday mass. "The climate is such that we worry for the safety of our congregation," he explained. Fellow clergy worldwide share those worries.

Lankford warned that the United States will be watching.

"Turkey should consider carefully how it handles the case of Pastor Brunson," he wrote. "America cares deeply

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y about how our people are treated across the world, and we are watching closely. â€  
America sees this both as a matter of religious freedom and safety for its citizens. If this is how Turkey treats an America  
n like Andrew Brunson, other Americans will hesitate before taking their business to Turkey.â€  
Read More: <http://www.almonitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/01/turkey-asks-trump-extraditegulen.html>

Keep praying for Andrew and the situation.