

Wife of Pastor Imprisoned in Turkey Meets With Secretary Tillerson

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met with the wife of a jailed American pastor, Andrew Brunson, in the Turkish capital Ankara on Thursday night, a State Department official said on Friday.

Brunson is a missionary who has been held in Turkey since October on charges of being part of a terrorist organization, according to news reports.

“Secretary of State Tillerson wanted to make sure he met with Mrs. Brunson to share the most recent information he had on Pastor Brunson’s case,” the official said.

“The secretary is committed to staying in touch with Mrs. Brunson regarding the case moving forward,” the official said.

The pastor and his wife, Norine Brunson, were initially detained on immigration violation charges in October, when they were operating a small Christian church in the city of Izmir on Turkey’s western coast, media reports say.

Turkish media reports say Brunson has been charged with membership of the Gulenist Terror Organization, the term which Turkish authorities uses to refer to the network of Islamic cleric Fethullah Gulen.

Ankara accuses Gulen and his followers of being behind an attempted coup in Turkey last July. Gulen rejects the allegations.

Tillerson was in Ankara to meet Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and senior government ministers for talks which focused on the conflict in neighboring Syria.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told a joint news conference with Tillerson that Ankara expected Washington to take concrete steps on the extradition of Gulen, calling for his detention in the United States. {eo}

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