

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 23, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

America's strength has always emanated not just from its military capabilities, but from its values and ability to inspire. Presidents of both major political parties recognized this unique gift, using it to shape global affairs and give hope to those seeking a better and more democratic life. President Reagan understood this well when he said, "Above all, we must realize that no arsenal, or no weapon in the arsenals of the world, is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. It is a weapon our adversaries in today's world do not have." So did President Kennedy when he spoke in West Berlin during his iconic Cold War "I am a Berliner" speech. Tragically, your crude abandonment of such values at home and abroad and embrace of global autocrats has weakened our great nation and undermined its moral standing in the world.

The most recent example of this dereliction of American moral leadership revolves around your deeply troubling and embarrassing response to the brutal murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Despite mounting evidence that Mr. Khashoggi, a peaceful critic of the Saudi government who spent time living and working in the United States, was tortured and killed, the White House has continued to equivocate on the obvious and coddled the leaders of the Saudi regime. At times like this, the United States should speak firmly with a united voice—that American values are not for sale and that such actions are intolerable in the civilized world.

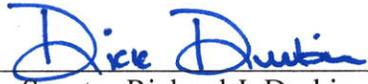
Unfortunately, your troubling abandonment of America's moral standing did not begin with Mr. Khashoggi's murder. You similarly embraced Russian dictator Vladimir Putin, who has murdered his opponents both in Russia and abroad, including on the soil of key NATO allies. Mr. Putin has interfered in democratic elections and tried to manipulate those in other allied democracies. Yet, you enamored yourself with Mr. Putin, trusting his word over American and allied intelligence and even naively suggesting you would turn over an American diplomat to his henchmen for sham questioning.

Similarly, you have lavished praise on North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Un, saying that you "fell in love" with the man who threatened the United States with nuclear war and has enslaved and murdered untold numbers of his own people. You have also supported countless other global autocrats, including those from Egypt, China, Turkey, and the Philippines. In some cases you have copied some of their worst behaviors by threatening journalists or encouraging calls for your political opponents to be jailed. Let us be clear, embracing such leaders, many unelected or elected in dubious circumstance, who actively undermine democratic norms, murder or jail their

opponents, or who are afraid of a free press or legitimate elections enables such behavior while undermining America at home and abroad.

As such, we urge you to end this troubling downward spiral and restore America's moral standing. You and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo can start by forcefully, without equivocation, condemning Jamal Khashoggi's murder and indicating there will be severe consequences to those around the world who act in such a barbaric manner.

Sincerely,



Senator Richard J. Durbin



Senator Patrick Leahy



Senator Dianne Feinstein



Senator Bernard Sanders