

May 14, 2013

Urgent Letter Request from Charles Ajalat

Dear Friends,

The following needs just a minute or two of your time to help obtain the release of the two bishops who were kidnapped three weeks ago in Syria while on a humanitarian mission. One of the bishops is Metropolitan Paul (Yazigi), brother of our Antiochian Patriarch, John X. The other is the Syriac Archbishop Youhanna (Ibrahim). Six prominent members of Congress are already spearheading this effort, yesterday sent a Dear Colleague letter to their remaining 429 colleagues to join as co-signers of the letter they are sending to the Secretary of State later this week (with a copy to Ambassador Ford), asking the Representatives to commit to their signing by this Friday noon. I have been working with the Congressional Representatives and they have asked me to contact you for needed help.

The letter to the Secretary and the Dear Colleague letter are both attached below. Both simply express the Members concern and ask that the release of these hostages be a priority of our Government.

The sponsors of the kidnapped bishops' letter ("Sherman letter") so far include Congressional Representatives Brad Sherman a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (Los Angeles), Carolyn Maloney (New York, Co-Chair Hellenic Caucus), Gus Bilirakis (Tampa, Co-Chair Hellenic Caucus) John Sarbanes (Baltimore), Trent Franks (Arizona and Chair of the International Religious Freedom Caucus) and Mike Pompeo (Kansas and a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence). God willing, before the deadline for the Congressional Representatives of this Friday to sign, many other prominent members of Congress will be joining them (a number more signed on after the Dear Colleague letter below). I also understand Congressman Darrell Issa, Chairman of the House Oversight Committee and Congressman Justin Amash (Michigan) are going to be signing today.

Each of the 435 Representatives in Congress, however, are besieged with many matters, get numerous such requests with similar short timelines, and there is a serious need to bring the matter to the attention of the Congressional Representatives as many times and by as many people as possible and to encourage them by letting them know their own constituents are concerned about the bishops' safety .

In that regard, I ask two non-time consuming things of you: 1. encourage your Congressman and members of Congress who are part of the caucuses supporting the letter by a one-sentence phone and e-mail message (all as simply set forth below); and 2. forward this e-mail to as many of your friends as possible asking them to do the same.

With regard to caucuses, if any of you know members of the caucuses supporting the letter, which presently are the International and Religious Freedom Caucus (60 members), and the Hellenic Caucus (119 members, list attached) in addition to contacting your Congressional

Representative, please contact as many of the Caucus Members as possible and ask them to sign the Sherman letter. The Hellenic Action Group has also taken up this cause and their support will be very important.

With respect to your Congressional Representative, please immediately call, leave a voice mail and send an e-mail pursuant to the following instructions:

(1) call immediately your Congressional Representative's Office in Washington D.C. (You can get the phone number by going to <http://contactingthecongress.org/> and putting in only your zip code).

(2) When the receptionist answers ask for (1) first, the e-mail address of, and (2) then to speak to, the person in charge of Foreign Affairs or Syria for the Congressional Representative's office and if you reach the aide's voice mail, leave the following message:

"Please ask my representative to sign before Friday the Sherman letter requesting the release of the two bishops kidnapped in Syria."

If for any reason the receptionist won't give you the aide's e-mail address, use the following for the e-mail address: firstname.lastname@mail.house.gov (using your actual representative's first name and last name—you may want to ask the receptionist for the correct spelling or check it on the internet) and whether you have the actual e-mail address of the aide or the e-mail address you constructed as above, please send the same e-mail message as the bolded message above.

Thank you for your help on this urgent, time-sensitive matter,

Charles Ajalat

Urge State Department to Prioritize Release of Kidnapped Syrian Archbishops

Deadline: Noon on Friday, May 17, 2013

Dear Colleague,

We ask you to sign the bipartisan letter below asking the State Department to make the immediate release of Metropolitan Boulos Yazigi, the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Aleppo, and Metropolitan Yohanna Ibrahim, the Syriac Archbishop of Aleppo, a priority in our efforts in Syria.

Metropolitan Yazigi and Metropolitan Ibrahim, who were traveling near Syria's border with Turkey, were kidnapped by unknown assailants as they were conducting humanitarian work in

the area on April 22, 2013. Their driver, Fatha'Allah Kabboud, a deacon in the Syriac Orthodox Church, was shot dead. Pope Francis has called for the release of these Archbishops.

As Members of Congress committed to religious pluralism in the Middle East and around the world, we believe the United States must do everything it can to ensure that Christians and other religious minorities have a safe future in Syria.

To sign this letter, or if you have any questions, please contact Siamak Kordestani in Rep. Sherman's office (siamak.kordestani@mail.house.gov or 55911) or Miriam Keim in Rep. Bilirakis's office (miriam.keim@mail.house.gov or 55755). The deadline to sign this letter is Friday, May 17, 2013.

Sincerely,

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

John Sarbanes
Member of Congress

Trent Franks
Member of Congress

Mike Pompeo
Member of Congress

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We write to express our grave concern over the kidnapping of Metropolitan Boulos Yazigi, the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Aleppo, and Metropolitan Yohanna Ibrahim, the Syriac Archbishop of Aleppo. The two Archbishops were abducted by unknown assailants while carrying out humanitarian work in the northern province of Aleppo on April 22, 2013. We mourn the murder of Fatha'Allah Kabboud, a deacon in the Syriac Orthodox Church, who was serving as the Archbishops' driver at the time of their abduction.

We urge the State Department to make Metropolitan Yazigi and Metropolitan Ibrahim's immediate release and safe return to Aleppo a priority in our efforts in the region.

Metropolitan Yazigi and Metropolitan Ibrahim had previously made public pronouncements that religious tolerance and diversity was under threat from the two-year conflict in their country.

The kidnapping of Metropolitan Yazigi and Metropolitan Ibrahim reflects the troubling rise in abductions in Syria, the expanding chaos and brutality of the civil war that has killed more than 70,000 Syrians, and an increasingly dangerous environment for religious minorities.

As Members of Congress committed to religious freedom in the Middle East and around the world, we believe the United States must do everything it can to ensure that all the diverse religions and ethnicities of Syria have a safe future.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

(Members of Congress)

CC: U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert S. Ford

List of Hellenic Caucus

113th Congress

(As of 3/11/13)

Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney and Gus M. Bilirakis, Co-Chairs

1. Andrews, Robert (D-NJ)
2. Bachus, Spencer (R-AL)
3. Becerra, Xavier (D-CA)
4. Bilirakis, Gus M. (R-FL)
5. Bishop, Timothy H. (D-NY)
6. Blumenauer, Earl (D-OR)
7. Calvert, Ken (R-CA)
8. Capito, Shelley Moore (R-WV)
9. Capps, Lois (D-CA)
10. Capuano, Michael (D-MA)
11. Carter, John (R-TX)
12. Chabot, Steve (R-OH)
13. Cicilline, David (D-RI)
14. Clay, Wm. Lacy (D-MO)
15. Coble, Howard (R-NC)
16. Connolly, Gerald E. (D-VA)
17. Conyers, John (D-MI)
18. Costa, Jim (D-CA)
19. Courtney, Joe (D-CT)
20. Crenshaw, Ander (R-FL)

21. Crowley, Joseph (D-NY)
22. Davis, Danny (D-IL)
23. Davis, Susan (D-CA)
24. DeLauro, Rosa (D-CT)
25. Deutch, Ted (D -FL)
26. Diaz-Balart, Mario (R-FL)
27. Doggett, Lloyd (D-TX)
28. Doyle, Michael (D-PA)
29. Duncan, John J. (R-TN)
30. Ellmers, Renee (R-NC)
31. Engel, Eliot (D-NY)
32. Eshoo, Anna (D-CA)
33. Forbes, Randy (R-VA)
34. Foxx, Virginia (R-NC)
35. Franks, Trent (R-AZ)
36. Garrett, Scott (R-NJ)
37. Gingrey, Phil (R-GA)
38. Granger, Kay (R-TX)
39. Green, Gene (D-TX)
40. Grimm, Michael (R-NY)
41. Gutierrez, Luis (D-IL)
42. Hastings, Alcee (D-FL)
43. Himes, Jim (D-CT)
44. Hinojosa, Ruben (D-TX)
45. Holt, Rush (D-NJ)
46. Honda, Mike (D-CA)
47. Israel, Steve (D-NY)
48. Johnson, Bill (R-OH)
49. Johnson, Eddie Bernice (D-TX)
50. Johnson, Hank (D-GA)
51. Kaptur, Marcy (D-OH)
52. Keating, William (D-MA)
53. King, Peter (R-NY)
54. Langevin, James (D-RI)
55. Larson, John B. (D-CT)
56. Lee, Barbara (D-CA)
57. Levin, Sander (D-MI)
58. Lewis, John (D-GA)
59. Lipinski, Dan (D-IL)
60. LoBiondo, Frank (R-NJ)
61. Lofgren, Zoe (D-CA)
62. Lowey, Nita (D-NY)
63. Lynch, Stephen (D-MA)
64. Maloney, Carolyn B. (D-NY)

65. Markey, Edward (D-MA)
66. Matheson, Jim (D-UT)
67. McCarthy, Carolyn (D-NY)
68. McDermott, Jim (D-WA)
69. McGovern, James (D-MA)
70. McIntyre, Mike (D-NC)
71. Meeks, Gregory (D-NY)
72. Michaud, Mike (D-ME)
73. Miller, Gary (R-CA)
74. Moran, Jim (D-VA)
75. Murphy, Tim (R-PA)
76. Nadler, Jerrold (D-NY)
77. Napolitano, Grace (D-CA)
78. Neal, Richard E. (D-MA)
79. Norton, Eleanor Holmes (D-DC)
80. Olson, Pete (R-TX)
81. Pallone, Frank (D-NJ)
82. Pascrell, Bill (D-NJ)
83. Pelosi, Nancy (D-CA)
84. Peters, Gary C. (D-MI)
85. Peterson, Collin (D-MN)
86. Poe, Ted (R-TX)
87. Polis, Jared (D-CO)
88. Quigley, Mike (D-IL)
89. Rangel, Charles (D-NY)
90. Roskam, Peter (R-IL)
91. Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana (R-FL)
92. Ross, Dennis A. (R-FL)
93. Roybal-Allard, Lucille (D-CA)
94. Royce, Edward (R-CA)
95. Rush, Bobby (D-IL)
96. Ryan, Tim (D-OH)
97. Sanchez, Linda (D-CA)
98. Sanchez, Loretta (D-CA)
99. Sarbanes, John P. (D-MD)
100. Schakowsky, Jan (D-IL)
101. Schiff, Adam (D-CA)
102. Schwartz, Allyson (D-PA)
103. Scott, Robert (D-VA)
104. Shea-Porter, Carol (D-NH)
105. Sherman, Brad (D-CA)
106. Sires, Albio (D-NJ)
107. Slaughter, Louise (D-NY)
108. Smith, Christopher (R-NJ)

109. Stockman, Steve (R-TX)
110. Terry, Lee (R-NE)
111. Tierney, John (D-MA)
112. Titus, Dina (D-NV)
113. Tonko, Paul (D-NY)
114. Tsongas, Niki (D-MA)
115. Van Hollen, Chris (D-MD)
116. Visclosky, Peter (D-IN)
117. Waxman, Henry (D-CA)
118. Whitfield, Edward (R-KY)
119. Wilson, Joe (R-SC)