…………………………………….. 2020

Mr. Bashar al-Assad

President

of the Syrian Arab Republic

Presidential Palace

Mezzeh area

Damascus - **Syria**

Dear Mr. President,

As a member/supporter of ACAT-Switzerland, the Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture and the Death Penalty, I am writing to you regarding the situation of

**Mr. Khalil Ma’touq and Mr. Mohamed Thatha.**

Ma’touq, human rights lawyer and director of the Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research, and his colleague and assistant Mohamed Thatha have been missing since October 2, 2012, when they were en route from Ma’touq’s home in Sahanaya to their office in Damascus. It is believed that they were arrested at a government security checkpoint. The exact reasons for the arrest are unknown, but there are strong reasons to believe their arrest is connected to their legitimate and peaceful human rights work. Despite repeated requests by their families and lawyers for information about their fate, their whereabouts are still unknown. However, individuals released from the government’s custody in 2015 have informed Ma’touq’s family that while in detention they spotted Khalil Ma’touq in various government-operated detention facilities, like the State Security Branch 285 and the Military Intelligence Branch 235 in Damas. Eight years without any single news about your loved ones is an unbearable burden for any human being.

**I therefore urge you to do everything in your power to bring an end to the detention of the two men and to help alleviating the suffering of the two families by:**

* **finding out without delay about the whereabouts of Mr. Khalil Ma’touq and Mr. Mohamed Thatha;**
* **immediately and unconditionally releasing them;**
* **taking all necessary measures to guarantee their physical and psychological integrity and security;**
* **pending release, granting them access to their family, their lawyers and doctors;**

**• ordering an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of** **Mr. Khalil Ma’touq and Mr. Mohamed Thatha and bringing the responsible of any wrongdoings to justice.**

The rights of Mr. Khalil Ma’touq and Mr. Mohamed Thatha are enshrined, among others, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the UN Convention against Torture (CAT). The Syrian Arab Republic is Party to these instruments and is bound to respect and apply them.

I thank you for the attention you will give to this concern.

Yours respectfully,

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