

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

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**Bashar al-Assad
President of Syria
Damascus, Syria**

Dear President al-Assad:

I write to thank the Syrian Arab Army for its heroic rescue of Christians in the Qalamoun Mountain Range. I am especially grateful for the spectacular victory at Yabroud, where the Syrian Arab Army and Air Force liberated Christians and other Syrians who had been held captive by terrorists for several years. We are deeply grateful for the skill and valor displayed by Syrian troops who rescued the 13 nuns who were kidnapped and used as human shields by the cowardly jihadists at Yabroud.

It is obvious that the war in Syria has largely been fought by vicious war criminals linked to al-Qaeda. Groups like al-Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant routinely commit war crimes as a matter of official policy. They proudly post YouTube videos showing mass executions of prisoners of war, beheadings of priests and other civilians, and even cannibalism. In Aleppo, last June, al-Nusra boasted of forcing a mother to watch as they murdered her 14-year-old son by shooting him through the mouth and neck. It is difficult to understand how any civilized nation can condone the actions of such bloodthirsty criminals.

Clearly, the Syrian people have grown weary of seeing foreign mercenaries enter their land to fight against them. Your people suffered the criminal acts committed by those jihadists, who came to rape and murder innocent Syrians. Now, even some in the Western media are reporting that the rebels have lost the war—that their cause has grown hopeless.

Yet to this day, few Americans realize that the rebels in Syria are dominated by our arch-enemy, al-Qaeda. They do not know that your enemies have sworn allegiance to the same organization that, on September 11, 2001, crashed jetliners into the Pentagon and the Twin Towers, killing over 3,000

innocent Americans. Today, al-Qaeda-linked fighters use suicide bombs to murder helpless women and children in *your* country, just as they slaughtered helpless civilians here.

I cannot explain how Americans, who suffered so grievously at the hands of al-Qaeda, were tricked into supporting the jihadists. But I do know that many U.S. officials disagree with equipping and training the terrorists who penetrate your borders from the Kingdom of Jordan and through Turkey.

The worst possible outcome would be for the rebels to seize the capital and raise the dreaded black flag of al-Qaeda over Damascus. For that reason, the rebels have been denied advanced weapons. Military planners know that the terrorists are deceitful and untrustworthy. Nothing prevents them from turning anti-aircraft missiles against civilian aircraft. Were they were to seize control of Syria's reported arsenal of 4,000 MANPADS, terrorists could turn airliners into fireballs at Dulles Airport, Heathrow, and LaGuardia, paralyzing commercial aviation across the globe. Helping them to do so is an act of utter madness.

You have followed the practice of your father by treating with respect all Christians and the small community of Jews in Damascus. You defended their churches and the Jewish synagogue, and you have permitted them to worship freely according to their beliefs. I am grateful for that.

By contrast, wherever rebels have seized control, they have acted as thieves, criminals and vandals. They raped, tortured, kidnapped and beheaded innocent people. They defiled the churches. The terrorists imposed the loathsome "dhimmitude" tax on Christians and Jews, treating them as subhuman. I pray that your army will drive the jihadists from Syria, so that Syrians of all faiths may live together in peace.

Until then, I pray that the Syrian armed forces will continue to exhibit extraordinary gallantry in the war against terrorists. Please convey my personal thanks to the Syrian Arab Army and Air Force for protecting all patriotic Syrians, including the religious minorities who face death at the hands of the foreign jihadists.

Sincerely,


Richard H. Black
Senator of Virginia, 13th District