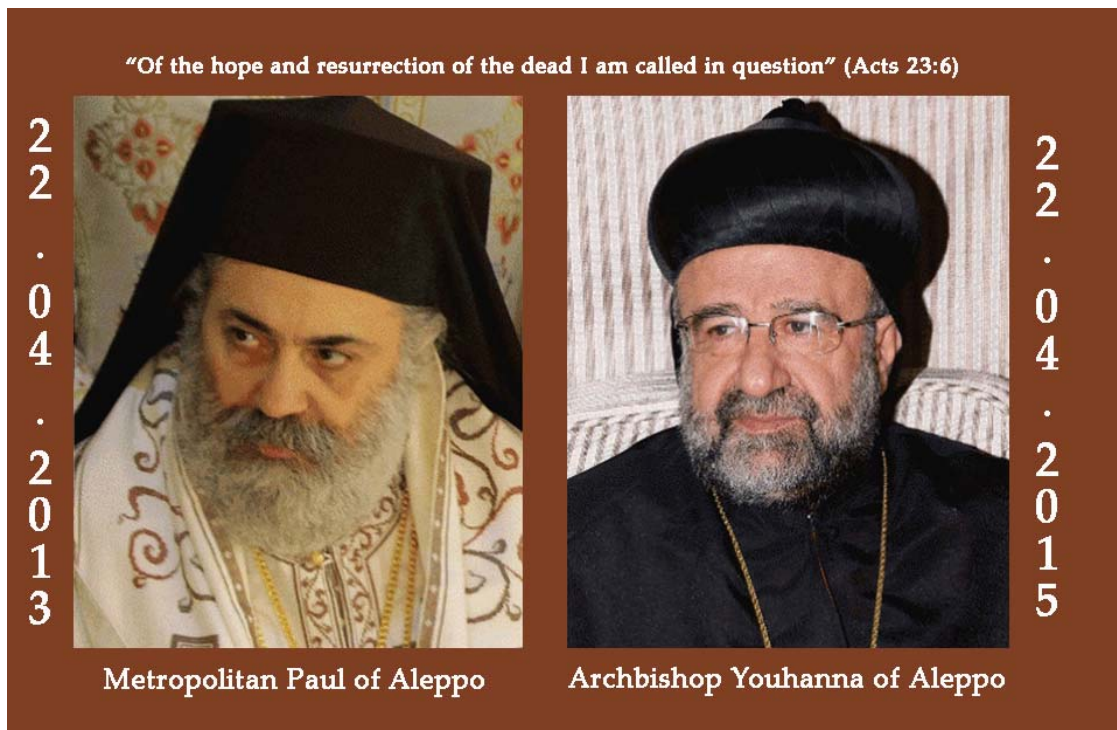


A Joint Statement

Issued by the two Patriarchates of Antioch and of All the East:
The Greek (Roum) Orthodox Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church

On the occasion of the second anniversary of kidnapping the two
Metropolitans of Aleppo:

His Eminence Paul (Yazigi) and His Eminence John (Abraham)
on April 22, 2013



Damascus
April 22, 2015

"It is for our hope in the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial." (Acts 23:6)

Our bishops, Paul and John, are on trial; what once characterized the beginning of the Christian Evangelization, now returns to the same geographical location, though with different personalities. It is a rare trial, not only in the East, but in the contemporary world. The convoluted nature of their kidnapping did not strike the terrestrials only, but the celestials also. In this struggle, the Great Judge will prevail, for He has the final ruling in this case; the case of True Man, and of True God.

This trial could be unfair as proposed by their captors. Most probably, the detainees are not able to plead their case. But their articulate statement was written by their own spirits, and their lives. The testimony they present remains incessant, as it rebounds in the wilderness of this world.

O brethren of the Word, our children of Aleppo, in you and among you we have planted the seeds of the word of truth, of testimony, and of ministry. Behold, the plant is growing! Seeing this growth in you, we are honored by its fruits. We are astounded by your perseverance, which strengthens our perseverance. We exalt in your steadfastness, which sustains our steadfastness. We esteem your patience, which recompenses our patience. Why not? You are our "glory" and "pride" (1 Tess. 2.19; 20) **in this trial of preaching.**

O brethren of Faith, our children of Aleppo, our faith, preaching, and ministry by hand, heart and conscience are on trial; we live today on fallen earth, so that we may live thenceforth in the Heavenly Kingdom. Man has the right to believe in the True God, and to faithfully minister to "his neighbor as to himself." Our belief in the True Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, leads us to minister

wherever we are settled, but we will continue to be citizens where we are today. We will not deviate one iota from this determination. It deserves from us every sacrifice in defense of human dignity, when man is oppressed and dehumanized by the contemporary human market, and is offered as a commodity in a wicked commerce. The sting of dehumanization shall be broken **in this trial of dignity.**

O brethren of hope, our children of Aleppo, be not oblivious to the fact that we are on trial "for our hope in the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23: 6). St. Paul attested once, and we declare it aloud: they want to eradicate the future at the expense of the present! However, they do not know that the Lord of heaven and earth, Who created them both, also provided that we may traverse the distance separating the two in spirit through Faith, and may attain the future with God-given hope toward achieving His promise to us. The present life is transient, but the future one is permanent. We all look forward in great expectation, remaining steadfast with this hope in the face of death, crouching close to destroy your bodies and souls. However, our hope in the resurrection of Christ has broken the sting of death **in this trial of endurance.**

O brethren of faith, our children of Aleppo, it is undeniable that, facing such a trial, it will only be proper if man confronts it with his true identity and faith. You have been tempted to betray the love of Christ towards us, and to let hearts and consciences grow dim to the degree of conceding to the pursuit of the path of the passions and all the odious forms of selfishness. When we see you strong and consistent, brethren, our hearts rejoice with the sight of your love among the wreckage of fallen humanity, whose self-centeredness has truly reached the gates of Hades. By your love we conquer everything, and by it you overcome all forms of death, so that you may enter into the Kingdom of the God of Love. Amongst devastation, death and fatality, the edifice of your love will be built as a final judgment **in the trial of conscience.**

O brethren of blood, our children of Aleppo, you have been judged, and you will be judged. Some of you have received the favorable judgment of God to be martyrs and confessors, and some of you live the testimony of unsurpassed hope, in silence or under threat, in weakness or in agony. However, by your perseverance you muzzled those who lay a wager for your betrayal, apostasy, and feebleness in the face of weakness, enticement, or threat. Your blood, whether still pulsating or shed, is a balm to your families and to your brethren, and a seal of victory **in the trial of immortality**.

O brethren of truth, our children of Aleppo, be assured that he who has declared victory over obvious truth and hidden falsehood is silenced. We see them through the eyes of the heart, and fathom what is noticeable in them, in their words (media) and actions, as well as in their secret intentions, and consciences. No truth will supersede the truth of God and man, regardless of their proliferated sins. This is the cry of John in all of us: "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." (1 Jn 3:14 to 15). We will not plea-bargain when falsely accused, and we will not yield to anyone except to the Truth. We proclaim it with you, at the heart of your suffering, struggle, steadfastness, and courage. By this, you have disclosed their evident error **in the trial of the truth**.

O brethren and compatriots, our children of Aleppo, your wound is our wound, and your pain is our pain, and your tears are our tears, and your life is our life. Our hands are extended to you, and our hearts have room for all of you. Let us shake hands, talk to each other, have peace, reconciliation, mutual understanding, cooperation, and integration. The solution is not achieved by violence, but by multiple forms of dialogue. The fear comes when human civilization perishes and disappears, and when this trial

takes a prolonged time. With you we raise the flag of the brotherhood **in the trial of unity.**

O brethren of same destiny, our children of Aleppo, our East is made up of deserts, rocks, mountains, rivers, water, and trees. If they vanish, life will no longer exist, and it will have no meaning. Our East has become an open arena for all evils. The bargain of this trial is to demolish life in its cradle, shatter civilizations, remove the rudiments of its landmarks, conceal its characteristics, displace man, destroy history, and disfigure the identity of God. Our victory of truth on earth is derived from heaven, but not by calling upon God to be exploited, as impulses of passions, of which heaven is completely acquitted! We are aware that we are devoted to stay in the East, to which we belong, of which we are, in which we bear witness to our faith, from which our witness starts out, and on which we build our humanity. The one God was not for us a subject of dispute, and reason for fighting, or cause of division. We learned to address Him as "Our Father" (Matthew 6.9), so we are all, "Brethren." We can speak to everyone in truth and love, and "to lay down our lives for them" (1 Jn 3:16); and so we are able to ask them to confess that we share a common destiny. Either we all hold tight to it together, or we all lose! No believer or nonbeliever, whoever he is, may become, whether from the East or outside it, and bear a false witness, blinded to what is going on here. With you we raise the banner of brotherhood, confounding the false witnesses **to this human and religious trial.**

O brethren in humanity, our children of Aleppo, our cause is beyond one group or nation, and wider than one region or land. Our ordeal is a test for all humanity in modern world, which is distorted by its enslavement various distractions rather than God. We are thankful for all those who are aware of these perils, and for those are striving to contain them, treat them, and prevent them. We will not turn to be a title of an issue to be resolved and decrypted. We are not like this, for you are our issue! We are

vigilant, from our dwelling place, over the consciences of those who willingly continue to eradicate our cause: **the human right and the true God**. Is it not unreasonable for roles to be exchanged, so that the sentenced might become a judge, even if he was in a cell, and the judge might become sentenced, even though he is sitting **on the judgment seat**?

O brethren in completeness, our children of Aleppo, He Who was incarnate for us, carried our nature, endured unjust sentence, ascended on the Cross, went to Hades and then arose to heaven, has taught us that we are your "brethren", unworthy though we be, and that "Thine Father is our Father and Thine God is our God" (Jn 20:17). Our peace and joy in you have reached to a level whose height and depth is unattainable in our spiritual life, and whose length and width is immeasurable in our material life! It is a joy, and peace, according to measure of the giver: "My Peace I leave with you, My joy I give unto you... no man taketh from you." (Jn 14:27; 16:22). You have determined to give us your joy and your peace! How great is our victory, and how benevolent **is God's judgment!**

These are the ten categories of the brethren, and the "book" of our complete defense, which we "took out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." (Rev 5:7). This is our good news to you; "Listen to them" (Acts 2:14), so great is our consolation in you. We are all aware that the trial is not over yet, as we have yet many rounds, according to the will of the Holy One. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid... What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory... "(Romans 9:14; 22-23).

This is a victory of the right hand of the Most High, accomplished through you and through us! As our unceasing encounter is sustained in prayer for all, we lift it up to Thee, O Lord, for unto Thee belongs, glory, power, worship, and dominion forever! Amen.

Translated by
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