

11 December 2013

TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ARMED  
OPPOSITION IN SYRIA:

We write on behalf of the 13 international news organizations listed below. Over the past 12 months, we have witnessed the disturbing rise in the kidnapping of journalists while on assignment within the northern provinces of Aleppo, Idlib and al-Raqqa as well as elsewhere in Syria. By our estimate, more than thirty journalists are now being held. As a result of these kidnappings, a growing number of news organizations no longer feel that it is safe for their reporters and photographers to enter Syria, and many have decided to limit their coverage of the war, unwilling to have their staff members subjected to the increasingly common risk of abduction.

The international news organizations signing this letter are committed to providing the world with fair and in-depth coverage of the war, the activities of rebel-aligned forces, and the suffering of civilians within Syria. Those stories can only be told if journalists have the ability to travel within Syria without fear that they will be victims of kidnappings by criminal gangs or groups associated with the rebels. As long as kidnappings are permitted to continue unabated, journalists will not be willing to undertake assignments inside Syria, and they will no longer be able to serve as witnesses to the events taking place within Syria's borders. We know as well that Syrian journalists are being kidnapped, making it even more difficult for the world to know what it is taking place inside Syria.

We believe it is imperative for the leadership of the armed opposition to commit itself to assuring that journalists can work within Syria, secure from the threat of kidnapping. Among other things, we ask the leadership to assist in identifying those groups currently holding journalists and take the steps necessary to bring about their release.

The deterioration of security within rebel-controlled areas leaves journalists susceptible to future kidnappings. We understand that, as in any war zone, reporters face great risk of injury and death, and we accept those risks, but the risk of kidnapping is unacceptable, and the leadership is

in a position to reduce and eliminate that risk.

We appreciate your attention to this vitally important issue.

Signed,

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Senior Vice President & Executive Editor  
**The Associated Press**

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