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Latest: Three Syrian Patriarchs Demand Protection for Christians After Jeweller Maher Sankari Kidnapped for 120kg of Gold

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"A series of heinous and recurring attacks targeting the Syrian people, and Christians in particular,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

The three patriarchs heading Syria's historic churches issued a rare joint statement on Tuesday 17 November 2026, demanding that the authorities protect Christians and investigate a wave of kidnappings and attacks. Their statement came after Christian jeweller Maher Sankari, 38, was kidnapped and tortured in captivity, with his captors demanding 120 kilograms (265 pounds) of gold - worth about $15 million - for his release. The statement was signed in Damascus by Greek Orthodox Patriarch John X, Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Youssef Absi and Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II.

Think of a man riding his motorbike home through the streets of his own town in broad daylight. A car swerves into him on purpose, knocking him off the bike. Masked men drag him away while people watch. That is how Maher Sankari's ordeal began on 19 October, outside his home in Suqaylabiyah, a Christian-majority town in Hama province. Surveillance footage captured the whole thing. Then the messages started arriving on Telegram: images and a video showing Sankari gagged, shackled and badly bruised, and a demand for 120 kilograms of gold.

Sankari's injuries are reported to be so severe that he risks losing a leg. His family has lived with that knowledge for weeks while the kidnappers held him, and on 19 November the residents of Suqaylabiyah held a candlelit march calling for his release. His family has appealed to President Ahmed al-Sharaa to intervene. The march was quiet and dignified, but its message was not: a town that has already lost so much is asking, plainly, to be protected.

The patriarchs' statement condemned "a series of heinous and recurring attacks targeting the Syrian people, and Christians in particular," and warned: "These attacks are not, and have never been, isolated incidents." Those words carry weight because they come from the three men who lead Syria's oldest churches together. A joint statement from all three is rare, and it tells the world that the churches no longer see these attacks as random crimes. They see a pattern, and they want it investigated.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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