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Latest: Melkite Bishop Abdo Arbach Attacked in Homs as Syria Patriarchs Condemn Violence Against Christians

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

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Armed men broke into the Melkite Catholic eparchy in Homs on Saturday 14 November 2026, tied up Archbishop Jean-Abdo Arbach, assaulted him and robbed his office"

(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

Armed men broke into the Melkite Catholic eparchy in Homs on Saturday 14 November 2026, tied up Archbishop Jean-Abdo Arbach, assaulted him and robbed his office. Three days later, on Tuesday 17 November, Syria's three patriarchs issued a rare joint statement condemning the escalating violence against the country's Christians - a protest that named the attack on the archbishop and warned that the pressure on Syria's Christian minority is getting worse, not better.

The news of the attack travelled through unofficial channels while the Melkite Patriarchate and the Homs eparchy stayed silent. Neither Syria's Ministry of Information nor its Ministry of Interior issued any public statement about an armed gang binding a bishop in his own office.

The silence was finally broken by Bishop Ibrahim Ibrahim of Zahle, who wrote a letter of solidarity with Archbishop Arbach. Then, on Tuesday, the three patriarchs spoke together. The statement was signed by Patriarch John X of the Greek Orthodox Church, Patriarch Ignatius Ephrem II of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and Patriarch Joseph I of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church.

According to the reports that reached the outside world, the armed men entered the eparchy, bound the archbishop, assaulted him, and ransacked the premises. They stole his personal belongings and his mobile phones before leaving. Some reports spell the archbishop's surname Arbash, and the details differ slightly from one account to another - one says the attackers covered his eyes and mouth - but the core of the story is agreed: he was tied up, beaten, and robbed in his own office.

The patriarchs' statement went further than the Homs attack. It also pointed to systematic kidnappings for ransom in Al-Suqaylabiyah, a largely Christian town in western Syria, where families have been targeted again and again. The patriarchs said the pattern is no longer a series of isolated crimes. It looks like a campaign.

It is a pattern with a recent history. In Damascus, a statue of Saint Paul was stolen from the Bab Sharqi quarter, and the theft was never investigated. Nobody was arrested. Nobody was charged. For Christians watching from Homs, that silence said as much as any statement.

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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