

Swiss lawmakers appeal to Syria for release of former mayor

Suleiman Khalil has been imprisoned without charge by Syria's new government since February. A group of Swiss MPs is asking Syria to release him.

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, November 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Six members of the Swiss parliament [have written](#) to Syria's ambassador to Switzerland, Haydar Ali Ahmad, asking him to encourage his government to release Suleiman Khalil, the former mayor of the Christian town of Sadad.



Suleiman Khalil in 2017. csi

The lawmakers' public statement comes as Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa is expected to appear at the White House with U.S. President Donald Trump on November 10 - despite still being classified as a terrorist by the UN and subject to travel sanctions. Al-Sharaa, formerly known as Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, founded and led al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria during the civil war.

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Releasing Suleiman Khalil would do much to bolster international confidence in the new Syrian government's commitment to human rights and the rule of law.”

Marc Jost

Khalil, 51, has been [imprisoned](#) since February. He was arrested at his family home in Sadad, and has been held in prison in Homs since then, without charges, and without being able to speak with a lawyer or contact his family.

“We respectfully encourage the competent authorities to consider his release or, at the very least, to ensure that his rights are safeguarded in accordance with international standards,” the MPs wrote.

“At this important moment for Syria, respect for due process and transparent legal procedures are essential to strengthening public confidence and reinforcing the credibility of state institutions.”

Khalil is widely known and beloved in the region for his role in organizing Sadad's defense against ISIS in 2015 - likely averting a massacre of this ancient town's Christian population. His arrest has been seen by many as punishment from Syria's new government, whose leadership is drawn from jihadist groups which split off from ISIS in 2013.

Among the Swiss MPs who signed the letter are Marc Jost, Andreas Gafner, and Martin Haab. All three are members of the Swiss National Council's network for religious freedom.

Marc Jost commented, "Releasing Suleiman Khalil would do much to bolster international confidence in the new Syrian government's commitment to human rights and the rule of law. We hope that the Syrian government will be receptive to our appeal and return Suleiman to his family."

Andreas Gafner connected Khalil's plight to the wider challenges facing Christians in Syria. "Christians have lived in Syria for nearly 2,000 years. As members of parliament, we do not want to stand idly by while discrimination, terrorist attacks, and miscarriages of justice - like the nearly nine-month imprisonment of Suleiman Khalil - drive Syrian Christians out of their homeland."

Martin Haab agreed. "While much of the world was turning a blind eye to the threat that ISIS posed to Christians and religious minorities in Syria, Suleiman Khalil did his part to protect his people from ISIS. He is a hero, and he must be set free immediately."

Christian Solidarity International has launched a [campaign](#) to free Suleiman Khalil. At CSI's website, supporters can send a message directly to Syria's foreign minister, Asaad al-Shaibani, urging his government to release Suleiman immediately.

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