

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking Lawyers for Lawyers organisation for its efforts in supporting lawyers worldwide and for awarding my father, Khalil Maatouk.

‘All the people of Syria are Ranim, my daughter’ used to say my father, Khalil Maatouk, on every court day. When a lawyer defends his son or daughter every time he stands before a submissive and biased court, summoning a hopeful smile for a just ruling in the jungle becomes as difficult to as fire walking

Arresting and abducting human rights activists under mysterious circumstances has become so prevalent that death and enforced disappearance has become part their daily lives, a crime against humanity of the worst kind. The criminal not only masters the law, he *is* the law, on a quest to eliminate any legal and peaceful solution to all human rights violations, and acquit criminals.

For more than twenty years, Khalil Maatouk, along many of his colleagues, stood before the court, armed only with the word of truth, advocating for its distorted right to express its suffering. Their work has become a struggle with compounded crises on intricate judicial fronts. Yet, they have striven to understand the judiciary's conflicting and illogical practices and use Syria's new order and contradictions to address the current situation, including human rights violations, unfair rulings against the right of expression, intimidation tactics against any peaceful work while exposing its most basic contradiction with logic, reason, justice and proof.

Throughout these exaggerations and daily enforced marginalization of Justice, Mr. Khalil Maatouk remained a faithful father for all prisoners of opinion and conscience, advocating their cause for more than a quarter of a century before state security courts, always with a defiant hopeful simile on his face.

On behalf of my father and mother, who has painfully witnessed her husband's detention twice, I thank all the lawyers who took it upon themselves to smile in the face of detention and abduction, including my father's loyal friend, Mohammed Zaza, who was by his side when he was arrested, and who is sharing with him the darkness of his cell.