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TEXT OF MESSAGE DATED 26 JUNE 1987
FROM THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MARGARET THATCHER MP
PRIME MINISTER TO THE PRESIDENT

Begins

Dear Ron

Following our discussion at Venice, I want to let you have my views on policy towards Syria in the light of their action against Abu Nidhal.

I understand that the Joint Assessment which we agreed at Venice should form the basis of our consideration of future action towards Syria is almost ready; our people agree that the Syrian action against the Abu Nidhal presence in Damascus is a significant step in an attempt to recover international respectability, but that the organisation may still be harboured in Syrian-controlled Lebanon and there is no proof Syria has abandoned support for terrorism.

This is therefore only a partial move. I accept that some Governments may wish to respond to the Syrian action in an equally limited way. But I believe they should proceed step by step and relax their measures only as and when that is justified by convincing evidence of a substantial change in Syrian policy on terrorism. You know of the deep sense of outrage in Britain over the Hindawi affair: close relations with Syria will not be possible whilst those involved go unpunished.

Your message to President Assad and your intention to send General Walters to Damascus are consistent with this approach. I hope that he will make clear to the Syrians that any further improvement in your relations will depend on evidence of a fundamental and sustained change in Syrian policy on terrorism.

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BY RL NARA DATE 10/24/19



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We look for action against Abu Nidhal in Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon, against the Damascus-based terrorist groups which threaten Western interests and against officials closely involved with Hindawi.

If our European partners wish to lift the ban on high-level contacts with Syria, we will not object provided that they maintain in force the other measures we adopted last November. In commenting on General Walters' visit, we shall draw attention to the successful pressure by the West on Syria which has resulted in the move against Abu Nidhal.

Warm Regards

Margaret

Ends

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