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Letter to Bill

William B. Arthur
CBS News

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CBS NEWS

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A Division of CBS Inc.
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New York, New York 10019
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Robert Chandler, Vice President, Administration
and Assistant to the President

Dear Bill:

August 1, 1975

CBS News feels you should be apprised of the latest developments relating to 60 MINUTES' announced intention to return to Syria for another look at the status of the Jewish community there and to interview President Assad.

It had been our plan to return to Syria no later than August 10, so that any report which might result from the visit could be prepared by September 7, the final 60 MINUTES broadcast date of this season.

We so advised the Syrian authorities, but after considerable correspondence and discussion, the Ministry of Information has advised us that it will not be possible to issue visas to Mike Wallace and his crew before August 25, or for filming to begin before September 1. The Syrians gave as the reason for the delay commitments occasioned by the Damascus International Fair being held in August.

This would, of course, come too late for a broadcast report this season, and we have so advised the Syrians. We reiterated our request for an August 10 return, both by cable and through a personal appeal by 60 MINUTES associate producer Christine Ockrent, who had flown to Damascus to prepare for the anticipated August filming. Ms. Ockrent's appeal was unsuccessful.

In view of the fact that September 1 precedes by four months the return of 60 MINUTES to the air on January 4, 1976, we then requested that we be permitted to return in early November, closer to the return of 60 MINUTES to the air. The Syrians have assured Ms. Ockrent that 60 MINUTES can return at that time. Accordingly, we plan to do so.

Should any further developments occur, I shall keep you advised. By copy of this letter, I am also informing the American Jewish Congress of these developments.

Sincerely,



Mr. William B. Arthur
Executive Director
The National News Council
One Lincoln Plaza
New York, New York 10023

cc American Jewish Congress