

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

CATHLEEN COLVIN *et al.*,

*Plaintiffs,*

v.

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC,

*Defendant.*

Civil No. 1:16-cv-01423 (ABJ)

**DECLARATION OF CHRISTOPHER ARAYA-COLVIN**

I, Christopher Araya-Colvin, declare as follows:

1. I am a U.S. citizen over 18 years of age. I am currently a high school senior, due to graduate in June of this year, and have been admitted to attend New York University's Music Industry program in the fall. My mom, Cathleen Colvin, was the youngest sister of Marie Colvin. My siblings and I are beneficiaries of her estate.

2. Aunt Marie was my hero when I was growing up. I was too young to understand the significance of her work when she was still alive, although I knew she was a journalist who braved the most dangerous parts of the world. I was more interested at the time in the explosions she described to me, than in what I now know about the social and political significance of her work. Before Aunt Marie's death, her animated bedtime stories of war zones felt as if they were just that: stories in faraway lands, not the real violence and chaos I now see in the world. Even her account of losing her eye

to a grenade blast sounded like an action movie. When I was younger, her eye patch was the cool sign of a trademark badass. I see it now as embodying the physical sacrifices my aunt endured in order to bear witness for those suffering and without a voice.

3. There was no one I've ever known like Aunt Marie. She was larger than life, loud, and hilarious. She gave us kids extravagant presents whenever we saw each other, like the real leather jacket she got for me when I was about ten, which I almost immediately outgrew. She never talked down to us, speaking to us little kids as if we were any other adult.

4. My siblings and I had a special relationship with Aunt Marie because she was so close to my mom. Mom adored her, looked up to her. She always says that Aunt Marie raised her, carrying her around when she was little, taking her to all of her college parties. I was too young to really grasp their relationship, but I remember Mom and Aunt Marie speaking on the phone all the time, even when Aunt Marie was deployed far away.

5. I was twelve, and we were on a family ski trip when Mom woke us up, hysterical, to tell us that Aunt Marie had been killed in Syria. It didn't feel real. I couldn't imagine how a government could do such a thing, let alone against a member of my family. We all cried during that long drive back to Long Island, mostly in silence. None of us could bring ourselves to form words. It is still something that feels too painful to discuss.

6. Losing Aunt Marie really changed my family. She carried a lot of weight, and her death sent shock waves that created tensions between Mom and her siblings that had

not existed before. Mom and our grandmother were absolutely devastated. It felt like Grandma started to deteriorate mentally much more quickly after losing her first child. Mom, who is under constant pressure from work, had lost her favorite person to talk to and beloved older sister. I remember her crying inconsolably all the time at first. And on some days, I still catch her crying by an old picture.

7. I still break into tears when I hear *Bridge over Troubled Waters*, a song we played at her funeral. It was there that I first started to understand how consequential Aunt Marie was. There were so many people who came, wanting to tell us how much her reporting had meant to their communities. A group of them even gave us a painting of her as a tribute.

8. I had a really hard time after Aunt Marie was killed. There were other reasons, too, but her death triggered a long period of depression. I am better now, but I still carry Aunt Marie's death with me like a scar. It changed me, made me more cynical. I feel robbed of a role model who I never got to know as a young adult. With Aunt Marie gone, I can't quite bring myself to read the things she wrote. It brings too many painful thoughts. And I can't bring myself to follow what is happening in Syria: it only got worse after she was killed. I hate how it feels that she passed in vain.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my recollection.

Executed on March 16, 2018 in Oyster Bay, NY

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Araya", written over a horizontal line.

Christopher Araya-Colvin