



Report on Sectarian Violence in Syria After the Fall of the Assad Regime

Prepared by the Alawite Association of the United States
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Background

On December 8, 2024; after Fifty-four years under the rule of Al-Assad dictatorship, there was a regime change in Syria. A group of religious Islamic militant under the leadership of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) took control of Damascus and announced themselves as the new rulers of Syria.

Although the transitional Syrian government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa (also known by his nom de guerre/war name Abu Mohammad al-Julani), had repeatedly promised the protection of all Syrian minority groups, Christians, Druze and especially Alawites have been the victims of systematic violence since December 8, 2024. These violence incidents ranged from targeted killings and kidnappings to large scale massacres and bombings. All of these, reflect growing influence of extremist militias, a security vacuum, and failure of the transitional authorities to safeguard minorities population.

On February 1, 2025, a group called Saraya Ansar al- Sunnah was founded. This group is a Sunni jihadist group explicitly targeting Alawites and Shiites. Between Feb and June they claimed multiple killings of Alawite civilians in Arzah, Hama, Tartus, Homs, and the Mar Elias church bombing against Christian worshippers.

This violence against religious minorities continued after Ahmed al-Sharaa; the president of the Syrian transitional government, met President Trump in Riyadh in May 2025 and after the United States lifted sanctions on Syria, which put Syria on the wrong path and make the prospect of a stable Syria; that is the cornerstone of a stable middle east, less likely.

Major incidents by Community

1. Alawite Community

Since 2011, there has been systematic bad stereotyping of Alawites in the Arabic media and social media platforms. In many instances, the bad stereotyping crossed the threshold of hatred speech with some famous media anchors in very popular shows openly discussing the annihilation of Alawites. Since the fall of Bashar al-Assad on December 8, 2024, we have been witnessing the



results of this manifested with the so-called rebel fighters regularly referring to Alawites as pigs and with the inhumane way they have treated captured Alawites stepping on them and forcing them to make noises like donkeys and dogs. In addition, there have been regular incidents of kidnapping and killing of Alawites in Syria and many Alawites villages have been deserted since the fall of Bashar al-Assad. This violence was culminated in the series of massacres that took place against civilians from the Alawite religious minority in the Syrian coastal area on March 7-9, 2025. These massacres were described by American media as ethnic cleansing,¹ and by Amnesty international as war crimes.²

On June 30, 2025, Reuters released its own investigation into the massacres where they pieced together how the massacres took place and they managed to identify a chain of command leading the attackers directly to men who serve alongside Syria's new leaders in Damascus.³

Listed below are major violence incidents against Alawites that took place after December 8, 2024.

- **Late Dec 2024:** Islamist militants burned a 700-year-old Alawite shrine in Homs (Barouha) and killed shrine custodians.⁴
- **Jan–Feb 2025:** A surge of kidnappings and killings targeting Alawite civilians across Homs, Hama, Latakia—including 19 kidnapping victims, several of whom were killed.⁵
- **Mar 6–27, 2025 (Coastal massacres):** Multiple massacres across coastal Latakia, Tartus, Hama, and Homs—thousands of Alawites killed in collective punishments, extortion, and retaliatory killings by militias and security forces.⁶ Verified number of death casualties by the Syrian observatory for human rights in around 1700, however the real number is estimated to be much higher.
- **June 4–5, 2025:** Security checkpoints in western Hama reportedly killed 8 Alawite civilians on June 4 and 3 more in coastal areas on June 5, plus property destruction.⁷

One other aspect of the recent violence against the Alawite minority is the repeated incidents of kidnapping of Alawite women and girls in the last few months. Reuters has recently reported on 33 women and girls from the Alawite sect that were kidnapped in Syria in an article that was published June 27, 2025.⁸

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/17/middleeast/syria-massacre-alawite-minority-intl-invs>

² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/syria-coastal-massacres-of-alawite-civilians-must-be-investigated-as-war-crimes/>

³ <https://www.reuters.com/investigations/syrian-forces-massacred-1500-alawites-chain-command-led-damascus-2025-06-30/>

⁴ syriasupportmovement.org+1apnews.com+1

⁵ euaa.europa.eu

⁶ thetimes.co.uk+13en.wikipedia.org+13euaa.europa.eu+13

⁷ washingtoncentre.org

⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/shes-not-coming-back-alawite-women-snatched-streets-syria-2025-06-27/>



In another report on the same issue, Paul Wood published an article in The SPECTATOR on July 03, 2025 titled ‘The Alawite Women taken as sex slaves in Syria’.⁹

The issue of Alawite women and girl abduction has also been reported recently in some middle east media outlet as The National released a report on the issue on July 01, 2025 where they talked about a troubling pattern of disappearances and kidnappings of Alawite women, often orchestrated by what appear to be criminal networks, frequently involving ransom demands, motivated by financial gain and, in some cases, sectarian retribution.¹⁰

The issue of Alawite women abduction has been brought to the attention of the transitional Syrian government by human right activists, media activists and in the security council by Geir O. Pedersen; the United Nations special envoy to Syria.¹¹

However, the transitional Syrian government has failed to address the issue in a professional and impartial manner. Despite the gravity of the reports of these abductions, there is little evidence that the transitional Syrian government took meaningful steps to document the cases, engage in humanitarian negotiation or even publicly condemn these acts regardless of sectarian affiliation. This lack of action points to a failure in upholding basic humanitarian standards and undermines claims to moral or political legitimacy. This limited response also reflects broader issues of sectarian bias and weak institutional accountability.

2. Christian Community

Since the collapse of Assad’s regime in December 2024, Syria’s Christian minority has faced a troubling resurgence of sectarian hostility. In towns such as Maaloula and rural areas like Maharda, Christians have been subjected to hateful rhetoric—murders, kidnappings, church desecration, threats, forced curfews, and looting.¹²

In Aleppo, a mosque attendee dubbing Christians “impure” sparked widespread outrage during a Ramadan interfaith charity event.¹³ An escalation of violence in Latakia and Tartus claimed dozens of Christian lives amid reprisals against Alawites in March 2025, with some extremist factions using sectarian hate speech on social media and leaflets chanting “Death to pork eaters”.¹⁴

Despite wary assurances from authorities and promises of protection, Christian leaders and international observers warn that unless hate speech is urgently confronted, Syria’s centuries-old Christian communities face growing persecution and insecurity. Listed below are major violence incidents against Christians that took place after December 8, 2024.

⁹ <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-alawite-women-taken-as-sex-slaves-in-syria/>

¹⁰ <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2025/07/01/alawite-abductions-syria/>

¹¹ <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16049.doc.htm>

¹² christianitytoday.com+15syriacpress.com+15thelevantnews.com

¹³ thelevantnews.com+1thelevantnews.com

¹⁴ christianitytoday.com+2syriacpress.com+2catholicnewsworld.com



- **Dec 24, 2024:** Christmas tree was burned in Suqaylabiyah—believed to be by foreign Islamist fighters—prompting protests in Damascus, though HTS detained suspects and restored security.¹⁵
- **Late Dec 2024–Feb 2025:** A wave of smaller attacks on Christian institutions: cemeteries vandalized, graves desecrated in Homs’ Zaydal, church doors damaged, Christian youths kidnapped in Wadi al-Nasara.¹⁶
- Feb–May 2025: Vandalism of churches and cemeteries; kidnappings in Wadi al-Nasara.
- **May 16 & 18, 2025 (Maharda):** A Christian family’s car was burned; death threats via leaflets, and a security convoy shouting Sunni slogans passed through town—heightening fears among Christians.¹⁷
- **June 22, 2025 (Mar Elias Church bombing):** A brutal attack on the Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus by a suicide bomber and gunmen, killing at least 25 and injuring 63. ISIS claimed responsibility; Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah also professed responsibility.¹⁸

The Patriarch of Syria’s Greek Orthodox church criticized the country’s new authorities’ response to the 22 June suicide attack on the Mar Elias Church in Damascus, saying that the country’s new authorities bore responsibility for the attack.¹⁹

After these comments, the Patriarch has been under a wave of attacks on social media from journalists and activists that usually advocate for the current transitional Syrian government.

3. Druze Community

In late April and early May 2025, the Druze minority in Sahnaya, Jaramana, and Suwayda faced a wave of hate speech and brutal attacks following a fabricated audio clip falsely attributing a speech offensive to Prophet Muhammad to a Druze cleric. This led to sectarian clashes that killed dozens—some victims were even executed and mutilated, with attackers openly chanting anti-Druze slogans²⁰. The Druze spiritual leader, Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri, denounced the violence as a “genocidal campaign” orchestrated by pro-government militias.²¹ Online hate also surged, amplified by disinformation networks spreading the false audio and coordinated sectarian messaging. Despite a shaky ceasefire and negotiations, Druze schools and universities saw harassment, and many students were forced to withdraw. The United States and European nations condemned these incidents as unacceptable and urged accountability and protection for the Druze.²² With fear and mistrust rising, Druze leaders stress that without firm steps against hate speech and violence, Syria’s fragile unity—and the community’s very survival—remains under

¹⁵ [the-guardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)+[7washingtoncenter.org](https://www.washingtoncenter.org)+[7theaustralian.com.au](https://www.theaustralian.com.au)
[syriasupportmovement.org](https://www.syriasupportmovement.org)+[4timesofisrael.com](https://www.timesofisrael.com)+[4thetimes.co.uk](https://www.thetimes.co.uk)+4

¹⁶ [syriasupportmovement.org](https://www.syriasupportmovement.org)

¹⁷ [syriacpress.com](https://www.syriacpress.com)

¹⁸ en.wikipedia.org+[4washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com)+[4en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)+4

¹⁹ [https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/b000440e](https://www.monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/b000440e)

²⁰ [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)+[15csi-usa.org](https://www.csi-usa.org)+[15reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com)+15

²¹ [csi-usa.org](https://www.csi-usa.org)+[7apnews.com](https://www.apnews.com)+[7openprivilege.com](https://www.openprivilege.com)

²² [963media.com](https://www.963media.com)+[15welattv.net](https://www.welattv.net)+[15reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com).



grave threat. Listed below are major violence incidents against Druze that took place after December 8, 2024.

- Feb 28–Mar 2, 2025 (Jaramana clashes): Armed Druze groups confronted transitional government forces in Jaramana (Damascus suburb), resulting in casualties on both sides (at least 1 security officer killed, 9 civilians injured); later settled via power-sharing agreements.²³
- Apr 28–30, 2025 (Druze–government clashes): Renewed sectarian violence in Jaramana and Sahnaya after a blasphemous audio clip spread; at least 9–13 deaths, including Druze men and security personnel. Authorities blamed outsiders and pledged investigations.²⁴

Government Response

Although there were some arrests and that the government has declared opening investigations in many incidents. Overall, responses have been suboptimal, at best. Adding to that, in some regions, transitional forces were implicated in or failed to prevent attacks. In addition, efforts at community reconciliation are limited and undermined by ongoing violence. In response to this violence, minority communities have begun to arm themselves or flee.

Conclusion

The sectarian violence and the overall resurgence of sectarianism threatens Syria’s fragile transition and the survival of its pluralistic society. To face this issue, a firm, impartial, and coordinated response—both nationally and internationally—is essential and is urgently needed to prevent further bloodshed and support national healing.

²³ apnews.com+6en.wikipedia.org+6aljazeera.com+6.

²⁴ aljazeera.com+2aljazeera.com+2english.almayadeen.net+2