

Monitoring Report on Developments in Syria



Alevi Philosophy Center

Alevi Düşünce Ocağı (ADO)

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to inform the international community about the genocide initiatives and other human rights violations committed against the Alawite population in Syria. In particular, since the regime change in December 2024, the forces of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which assumed control, have systematically carried out various human rights abuses—most notably human rights abuses and genocide initiatives—in areas densely populated by Alawite. These violations (Kidnapping, human trafficking, ransom and robberies, women slavery and most notably massacres of children and males), which have been documented and have escalated significantly since March 2025, have made international attention, condemnation, and humanitarian assistance vital for the civilians residing in the region.

These human rights abuses—primarily targeting women, children, and civilians at large—serve as a grim precursor and implicit indicators of the crimes that the current Syrian administration, under the control of radical elements, may commit in the future. The absence of a strong and unified international response to these atrocities not only enables further acts of violence but also emboldens the perpetrators, granting them a dangerous sense of impunity. The overarching objective of Salafi-jihadist radical groups appears to be the systematic transformation of the country into a place that is uninhabitable for minorities, and particularly hostile to women. By fostering an environment of terror, fear, and exclusion, these groups aim to erase the pluralistic fabric of Syrian society and replace it with an oppressive, ideologically rigid regime that leaves no room for diversity or basic human rights.

While these aggressive policies primarily affect the Alawite and Druze communities residing in Syria, the broader implications of an unstable, authoritarian, and massacre-prone Syrian regime pose significant risks for the international community as well. These risks include:

- a. **The reluctance of Syrian diaspora members to return:** In the presence of ongoing chaos and systemic violence, Syrians living abroad are unlikely to consider returning to their homeland, thereby prolonging displacement crises and placing continued strain on host countries and international humanitarian systems¹.

¹ UN, January 2, 2025

b. The transnational spread of jihadist ideology: Extremist ideologies cannot be contained within national borders. The radical groups currently in power may seek to export their so-called “revolution” beyond Syria, thereby influencing susceptible populations in neighboring countries (especially in Lebanon and Jordan) and contributing to regional destabilization.

c. The potential radicalization of Syrians in the diaspora: As the conflict persists and the prospect of return diminishes, there is a growing risk that segments of the Syrian diaspora—especially marginalized or disenfranchised individuals—may become susceptible to radicalization. This could lead to increased participation in extremist groups in host countries and the gradual erosion of modern, pluralistic worldviews among affected communities.

These developments collectively threaten not only the future of Syrian society but also the stability, security, and social cohesion of the broader international system.

Historical Background: Alawite, Otherness and Human Rights Violations

The Alawite community has, for centuries, been marginalized and designated as the "other" within the broader socio-political landscape of the region. During the Ottoman Empire, Alawites were often assigned a social status even lower than that of non-Muslim communities, reflecting deep-seated sectarian biases. They were frequently labeled as “heretical” by both Sunni religious authorities and, at times, by Shi’a clerical establishments². This dual stigmatization led to the institutionalized exclusion of Alawites, systematically positioning them outside the accepted religious and social order. As a result, the Alawite identity has historically been shaped not only by cultural and theological distinctiveness but also by continuous experiences of oppression and marginalization.

This exclusion is not a new thing; it is a deep-rooted phenomenon, as old as the history of Islam.

² Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon*, 85.

Although the rise of the Ba'ath Party appeared to end the systematic exclusion of Alawites, in practice, only a small political elite benefited. The majority of Alawites remained excluded from political representation and economic prosperity, continuing to live in rural and marginalized conditions. This superficial inclusion masked ongoing structural inequalities within the community.³

The brief reference to the historical exclusion of Alawites is intended to highlight a crucial point: the crimes committed against them are often misinterpreted as acts of revenge against the Assad regime. However, attributing the targeting of Alawites solely to their association with the regime is a fundamental misconception. These massacres are, in fact, the continuation of a long-standing pattern of marginalization and sectarian hostility that predates the current political context.

On the other hand, in the Middle East, the normalization of massacres is unfortunately a prevailing situation. The international community's indifference will lead to more civilian deaths, and this will only serve the interests of radical elements.

It is essential to recognize the historical marginalization of the Alawite community in Syria. This report seeks to once again underscore that these individuals are caught in the grip of Salafi groups and that, apart from international law, they have no source of support to rely on. Being massacred solely on the basis of one's religion, sect, or ethnicity is a manifestation of a mentality rooted in the darkness of the Middle Ages.

Massacres Against Alawites During HTS Regime

The data utilized in this section are based on media analysis and eyewitness testimonies. According to information gathered directly from the field, nearly 3,000 Alawite civilians have been massacred. Although the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has reported that between March 6 and March 17, 2025, a total of 1,084 Alawites lost their lives⁴.

³ Phillips, *The Battle for Syria*, 74.

⁴ Syrian Network for Human Rights, *Daily Update*, March 17, 2025

These massacres were carried out by HTS allied militants in a systematic manner, involving identity checks rather than occurring randomly. According to a report by *The Guardian*, survivors of the massacre described how militants went door to door, checking identity cards and other documents to identify and separate those who were Alawite⁵.

Similarly, according to reports by Reuters and various monitoring groups, hundreds of Alawite civilians were found dead within approximately six days⁶. Merely three months after the overthrow of Assad in December and the end of his regime along with nearly fourteen years of civil war, parts of western Syria were engulfed in a vengeful bloodbath. All of these massacres occurred in full view of the international community, and we express profound concern about the likelihood of further such atrocities. These human rights violations are reported in a very comprehensive and horrific way. The kidnapping of girls, their sale in slave markets, and the deaths of children and infants are all reported in the region through witnesses.

Most recently, it has been reported that four individuals—including a 12-year-old child—were executed after HTS-affiliated groups conducted identity checks and determined they were Alawite⁷. These massacres are not hidden revelations brought forth solely by our initiative; rather, they are unfolding openly before the eyes of the international community. We emphasize that these events should be seen as a grim "preview" of what may yet come.

Individuals who have contacted us express that they are merely waiting for the day they will be killed. Some Alawite women, in particular, have begun carrying poison with them, intending to take their own lives instantly during identity inspections, rather than fall into the hands of these militants. All of these distressing accounts have been compiled through firsthand testimonies from witnesses. War is a horrific reality for all, but it is particularly devastating for women. As discussed in previous sections, Alawite women are subjected to inhumane treatment and sexual violence due to being perceived as "spoils of war" by Salafi-jihadist ideologies. Another factor contributing to this grim reality is the notably more secular lifestyle that many Alawite women lead.

5 The Guardian, "'They Killed Him in Cold Blood': The Cycle of Revenge in North-West Syria," March 15, 2025

6 Pray for Us. They've Arrived: How Syria Descended into Revenge Bloodshed (Reuters) March 18, 2025

7 12-year-old boy among 4 killed in Syria's Tartous province, AP March 31, 2025

The witness testimonies we have collected reveal numerous deeply disturbing realities, many of which are too severe to be ignored. These accounts paint a picture of systematic and widespread violations not only of personal security but also of basic human dignity. Alawite individuals, already marginalized on the basis of their sectarian identity, are being subjected to degrading, cruel, and inhumane treatment that strips them of their fundamental rights and erodes their very sense of personhood.

In these conditions, where neither physical safety nor psychological well-being can be guaranteed, the Alawite population finds itself in an increasingly desperate situation. The accounts describe a climate of pervasive fear, trauma, and abandonment. With no meaningful protection provided by local actors or the de facto authorities in control of their regions, the Alawites' only remaining hope is for timely, effective, and principled intervention by the international community.

This is not only a humanitarian emergency, but also a very important step for the global community to take towards human rights, international law and the prevention of genocide and sectarian cleansing. As stated in the report, nothing seems to be going well in the region and we are deeply concerned about the safety of the lives and property of the Alawite here.

This violent and oppressive trajectory is being painfully experienced not only by Alawites but also by Druze, Christians, Syriacs, and Maronites. Places of worship targeted by jihadist groups and the increasing number of individuals killed after identity checks highlight the growing severity of the situation⁸. It is crucial to recall the importance of our international struggle against terrorism in this context. The normalization of such violence in the region and the impunity granted to perpetrators serve only to embolden aggressors. Our deep concern extends not only to Alawite but also to all other citizens belonging to minority identities.

The protection of all these minority identities is a humanitarian duty and will also prevent the radicalization of the region. We believe that defending coexistence is our most fundamental and humanitarian duty. Will this mentality, which strongly defends a single nation-religion understanding, not pose a threat to Syrian Sunni women in the future?

⁸ International Christian Concern, December 20, 2024.

Legal Assessment Under International Law

The 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide provides a clear and legally binding definition of genocide⁹. According to Article II of the Convention, genocide includes acts such as: “killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.”

These provisions were established in the aftermath of some of the darkest chapters in human history, with the express purpose of ensuring that such atrocities would never again be tolerated or ignored.

In light of this definition, the massacres, forced displacements, targeted identity-based killings, and systematic acts of terror currently being perpetrated against the Alawite population in Syria clearly constitute acts of genocide. The intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a religious and ethnosectarian group is not only evident through the scale and brutality of the violence, but also through the explicit ideological motivations of the perpetrators. These crimes are not occurring in secrecy or obscurity—they are unfolding in real time, in plain sight of the global community, with mounting witness testimony and documented evidence.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, which emerged as a moral and legal framework in response to the international failures in Rwanda and Srebrenica, obliges all UN member states to act decisively in three fundamental areas: prevention, intervention, and accountability. These are not aspirational ideals but binding responsibilities grounded in international law and reinforced by the Genocide Convention.

Preventive action may involve both political and humanitarian strategies aimed at de-escalating violence and protecting vulnerable populations. Where prevention fails, timely and proportionate intervention—whether diplomatic, economic, or, if necessary, military—must be pursued under international coordination. Finally, those responsible for committing, facilitating, or enabling acts of genocide must be held accountable before international judicial mechanisms to ensure that impunity does not prevail.

⁹ United Nations. *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. December 9, 1948.

If the international community fails to fulfill these duties, it not only allows untold suffering to continue, but also undermines the legitimacy of the legal frameworks it has pledged to uphold. The ongoing atrocities against the Alawite community require urgent global attention – not just as a humanitarian crisis, but also as a legal and moral response. While Syrian Alawites and all other minorities are under the risks of unspokable suffering and local administration keeps failing to control their allied militant groups, legal and legitimate focus of global attention on Syria is imperative to avoid a new and much wider Bosnia-Herzegovina or Myanmar disaster.

Conclusion

We are closely monitoring developments with great concern. The scale and severity of the massacres, systematic violations of human rights, and the targeted persecution of vulnerable communities demand urgent and unequivocal condemnation from the international community.

We call upon the international community—including governments, intergovernmental organizations, and human rights bodies—to raise their voices decisively against these atrocities. Silence or indifference would not only betray the victims and survivors but also undermine the universal principles of human dignity, justice, and the rule of law. It is the collective responsibility of the global community to intervene through diplomatic pressure, humanitarian aid, and, where necessary, more robust measures to protect those at risk and to hold perpetrators accountable.

Moreover, we urge the international community to prioritize mechanisms that ensure timely and effective documentation, investigation, and prosecution of crimes committed, so as to deliver justice and prevent impunity. We also emphasize the importance of supporting local civil society actors and protecting witnesses who courageously come forward with testimonies despite the risks.

In conclusion, the escalating violence and human rights violations witnessed in Syria are not merely regional issues; they represent a challenge to the conscience and commitments of the world at large. We therefore insist that urgent and coordinated international action be taken to stop these massacres, protect vulnerable populations, and restore peace and stability to the region.

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