

Please cite as: EUAA, '2.1.2. Targeting by non-state armed groups and unidentified actors ' in *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, July 2025.

2.1.2. Targeting by non-state armed groups and unidentified actors

Since December 2024, SJAC has documented targeted revenge killings of male individuals allegedly linked to the Assad regime's military or intelligence services. These killings, reportedly carried out by unidentified armed men, are based on the victims' alleged affiliation with the Assad regime and roles in past violations rather than their sectarian affiliation. Victims have included individuals from Sunni, Alawite, and Shia communities and were reportedly targeted for both formal roles in the intelligence and security of the former government or for being informants. These targeted attacks have occurred across multiple governorates including Aleppo, Dar'a, Damascus, Deir Ez Zor, Homs, Hama, and Latakia.206

During the reference period unidentified gunmen and Salafi-jihadi factions207 carried out assassinations of former members of Assad security forces,208 including members of the Air Force Intelligence, NDF, Liwa al-Quds, and Tiger Forces.209 Such incidents were reported in Homs,210 Aleppo,211 Dar'a212 and Hama governorates.213 One group claiming such attacks is Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah (Supporters of the Sunnah Battalions), a radical Sunni militant jihadist group which emerged in late January 2025214 and is ideologically aligned with ISIL.215 It has vowed to target Alawites, Shia Muslims, and loyalists of the former Assad government.216 The group describes itself as a 'decentralised' network that operates using a 'lone wolf'-style strategy, with members operating independently.217 It has claimed attacks primarily in Homs 218 and to a lesser extent in Aleppo, Hama,219 Latakia, and Tartous governorates220 targeting Alawites, including a sheikh and a journalist221 and members of security forces in the Assad government.222

Another group called Special Accountability Force emerged in April in northern Aleppo governorate claiming that its aim is to eliminate former regime collaborators involved in the human rights violations. A rise in vigilante attacks against former regime collaborators was recorded in the period that followed. Reports documented executions, primarily of Sunni collaborators, in Hama and Aleppo, and attacks against Alawites in Homs city, western Dar'a and Latakia.223 Sources also reported during the reference period that unidentified gunmen often using motorcycles224 carried out assassinations against Alawites accused of supporting the former government225 and having been informants.226

In June, the interim government issued a fatwa through the Fatwa Council that prohibits revenge killings and extrajudicial retaliation. The fatwa urges citizens to resolve disputes through official legal channels and criminalises acts of retribution.227 The impact of this measure could not be monitored within the time constraints of this report.

- 206

  SJAC, Revenge Killings Targeting Assad Regime Affiliates (December 2024 - May 2025), 22 May 2025, url

- 207

  ISW and CT, Iran Update, 7 May 2025, url

- 208

  ISW and CT, Iran Update, 15 May 2025, url; ISW and CT, Iran Update, 5 May 2025, url

- 209

  ISW and CT, Iran Update, 9 May 2025, url

- 210

  International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch Syria April 2025, n.d., url

- 211

  ISW and CT, Iran Update, 9 May 2025, url

- 212

  ISW and CT, Iran Update, 5 May 2025, url

- 213

  ISW and CT, Iran Update, 7 May 2025, url

- 214

  BBC Monitoring, Explainer: New militant group in Syria targets Alawites, Assad loyalists, 13 February 2025, url; BBC Monitoring, Briefing: New Syria jihadist group claims ongoing attacks on Alawites, 21 April 2025, url

- 215

  ISW and CT, Iran Update, 19 May 2025, url

- 216

BBC Monitoring, Briefing: New Syria jihadist group claims ongoing attacks on Alawites, 21 April 2025, url

- 217

BBC Monitoring, Explainer: New militant group in Syria targets Alawites, Assad loyalists, 13 February 2025, url

- 218

ISW and CT, Iran Update, 14 April 2025, url; ISW and CT, Iran Update, 5 May 2025, url

- 219

ISW and CT, Iran Update, 7 May 2025, url; ISW and CT, Iran Update, 4 June 2025, url

- 220

BBC Monitoring, Briefing: New Syria jihadist group claims ongoing attacks on Alawites, 21 April 2025, url

- 221

ISW and CT, Iran Update, 5 May 2025, url

- 222

BBC Monitoring, Briefing: New Syria jihadist group claims ongoing attacks on Alawites, 21 April 2025, url

- 223

Koontz, K., Waters, G., Without Accountability, Syria’s Sectarian Violence Will Only Worsen, TWI, 10 June 2025, url

- 224

SJAC, The Syrian Government Must Investigate the Targeting of Alawite Civilians in Homs, 13 May 2025, url; SNHR, Three civilians were killed and another injured after being shot by unknown gunmen in the city of Azaz in the Aleppo countryside on May 7, 2025, 8 May 2025, url

- 225

International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch Syria April 2025, n.d., url

- 226

ISW and CT, Iran Update, 15 May 2025, url

- 227

OSES, United Nations Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi - Briefing to the Security Council (17 June 2025), 17 June 2025, url; Enab Baladi, Syrian Fatwa Council prohibits revenge killings outside judicial framework, 6 June 2025, url

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu