Please cite as: EUAA, '2.4.2. Alawites' in *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, July 2025.

2.4.2. Alawites

Alawites constitute around 1.7 million or 9 % of Syria's population.304 They are primarily concentrated along Syria's coastal and mountainous hinterlands (Tartous and Latakia governorates), with smaller communities present in Homs, Hama, and Damascus.305

○ (a) Targeting by interim government forces and affiliated armed actors

Between 6 and 10 March, sectarian violence between the interim authorities and their affiliates on one side, and Alawite militias loyal to Assad, reportedly resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians mainly in Syria's coastal governorates of Latakia, Tartous306 and to a lesser extent Hama and Homs.307 These events involved extrajudicial killings, including field executions and mass killings, reportedly driven by retaliatory and sectarian motives.308 According to sources, most of the civilians killed were members of the Alawite community particularly from Latakia and Tartous governorates.309 According to SNHR, 1 334 individuals were killed in the violence. Out of these, 887 civilians and disarmed combatants of pro-Assad remnants were killed by security forces nominally affiliated with the MoD but operating with relative independence as well as local groups of armed civilians. Around 445 individuals (231 civilians and 214 members of security forces) were killed by pro-Assad remnants.310

Sources noted that the majority of civilian deaths inflicted by government security forces were carried out by SNA factions311 including the Hamza and Suleiman Shah/Amshat divisions,312 as well as by foreign jihadist fighters313 and irregular civilians.314 According to U.S. intelligence, SNA factions involved in the operations 'probably operated outside the direct control of the authorities during the fighting'.315 According to information received by Amnesty International, militias affiliated with the government killed more than 100 people in the coastal city of Baniyas on 8 and 9 March 2025. The organisation investigated 32 of the killings and concluded that they

were deliberate, targeted against members of the Alawite minority, and unlawful.316

By contrast, the involvement of GSS forces in extrajudicial killings was reportedly limited.316 SJAC stated that GSS forces involved in the operation appeared to be the most disciplined and the least likely to have committed violations against civilians.317 Sources reported that members of the GSS forces attempted to rescue or protect civilians on the coast from being killed by members of other armed groups.319

The violence led to the displacement of around 51 000 people, including 6 000 who fled to Lebanon. Widespread curfews and movement restrictions were imposed, including the closure of the Homs – Latakia highway, leading to the suspension of humanitarian operations.320

President al-Sharaa issued a decision to form an independent national committee to investigate the events321 and authorities reportedly begun prosecuting individuals accused of committing crimes during the insurgent activity in western Syria between 6 and 10 March.322 On 11 April, Al-Sharaa extended by three months the mandate of the independent fact-finding committee tasked with investigating and reporting on the coastal violence.323

In the aftermath of the violence between 6 and 10 March, sporadic reports of attacks against Alawites attributed to government forces and affiliated armed groups continued to emerge.324

☐ (b) Targeting by unidentified actors

Since early 2025, weekly reports have emerged of civilians, often Alawites, being killed by ‘unknown gunmen’ or ‘masked men’.325 Between January and the end of April 2025, at least 361 civilians were victims of extrajudicial killings in Homs and Hama governorates, according to SNHR, cited by Syria Direct. The majority of these killings occurred in areas predominantly inhabited by Alawites.326 Following the March

violence in the coastal areas, assassinations of Alawites mostly carried out by unidentified gunmen continued, with incidents reported in Latakia, Tartous and Homs governorates.[327] Between 23 and 25 April, SNHR documented the killing of at least 20 civilians in predominantly Alawite-inhabited areas of Homs city. These killings were reportedly carried out by unidentified armed groups operating outside state control following security operations by the GSS targeting individuals linked to the former Assad government, operations that were met with resistance from local groups. The attacks included targeted assassinations of individuals previously affiliated with the Assad government, some of whom had entered into reconciliation agreements, as well as random killings believed to be motivated by sectarian and retaliatory intent.[328]

According to SJAC, unlike ongoing revenge killings targeting individuals linked to the former Assad regime's security apparatus, the killings of Alawites in Homs appear to be based on sectarian identity, driven by the perception that all Alawites were complicit in the Assad regime's actions.[329] SJAC noted that these incidents appear to be geographically concentrated. While similar attacks have been reported in Latakia and Hama, they are most prevalent in certain neighbourhoods of Homs city and nearby areas in Homs governorate. According to SJAC, the perception that Alawites are inherently complicit in the Assad regime's atrocities seems particularly pronounced in Homs, likely due to the city's distinct conflict history during which thousands of Sunni civilians were displaced from Homs following human rights violations, including several massacres, some of which were reportedly carried out by Alawite neighbours.[330]

Despite the presence of security forces in Homs city, including GSS checkpoints at the city's entrances, the attacks on civilians continued according to SJAC. Some civilians have accused the authorities of condoning or even facilitating the murders.[331]

Since early 2025, dozens of Alawite men and women particularly from Homs have reportedly been abducted near their homes or workplaces by unidentified perpetrators, with their bodies discovered days later bearing gunshot wounds.[332] SOHR documented the kidnapping of 50 Alawite women by unidentified actors between the beginning of January and April 2025. Most incidents occurred in Homs, Tartous, Latakia, and Hama governorates.[333] An investigation by Le Monde reported that some of the abducted women who were released had been beaten, insulted and may have suffered sexual violence at the hands of their captors. Some members of the Alawite community claimed that the women were kidnapped for marriage by Islamist factions and foreigners located in Idlib governorate.[334] In April, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir O. Pedersen, 'raised concerns over reports of women and girls being abducted' in Syria without providing additional details.[335]

○ (c) Alawites working in the public sector

Under the Assad government, more than 80 % of Alawites worked for the state.[336] They received preferential military and security positions,[337] constituted the bulk of the army and intelligence officer corps and occupied most senior government posts as well as the top and executive roles in state-owned industries.[338] During the civil war, wives and children of killed Alawite soldiers received public jobs as compensation for their losses.[339] Many had been hired as ‘relatives of martyrs’, part of a practice of the Assad government that offered state jobs as compensation to families of fallen soldiers and security personnel, often without actual administrative need.[340] According to a STJ report, in 2024 there were around 2 800 contracts for spouses and children of ‘martyrs’. By the end of 2021, around 18 000 demobilised members of the army and security forces were appointed to public sector jobs following special recruitment competitions.[341]

While widespread public-sector layoffs have impacted the broader population, the dismissal of around half a million security sector employees[342] has disproportionately affected the Alawite community,[343] reflecting according to sources both targeted sectarian measures and their overrepresentation in government employment under Assad.[344]

The interim government reportedly dismissed an unspecified number of public-sector workers mainly women in teaching roles, particularly Alawites due to their marriages to security personnel associated with the Assad government. Alawites were overrepresented in teaching jobs.[345] According to International Crisis Group, the spouses were perceived by the authorities as guilty or unreliable by association.[346]

○ (d) Housing, land, and property issues

Sources interviewed by Reuters assessed that security forces affiliated with the interim government have evicted hundreds to potentially thousands of people, mostly Alawites, from their homes. While many evictions targeted former public sector workers who lost their right to government housing after dismissal, hundreds of Alawite families were reportedly forced out of privately owned homes solely due to their sectarian identity.[347] According to an investigation by the Economist, Alawites who were evicted from their houses in Damascus lived in accommodation reserved by the Assad government through the MoD for families of members of the armed forces.[348]

STJ documented the eviction and property seizure of at least 16 families, mostly Alawite, in a residential complex originally designated for army and police officers of the former Assad government in Rural Damascus. Armed groups affiliated with the interim government reportedly carried out arbitrary arrests and forcibly evicted the residents. In some cases, members of these armed groups and their families were allegedly installed in the vacated homes.[349] In May, UNHCR stated that the authorities have reportedly confiscated land belonging to mostly Alawite population in 12 villages in rural Hama governorate despite them having ownership. This has led to the displacement of approximately 2 000 families.[350]

According to senior GSS officials cited by Reuters, the new authorities established two committees to manage properties linked to individuals perceived as affiliated with the former regime, one overseeing confiscations and the other handling complaints.[351]

For detailed information on the situation of Alawites before March 2025, see section 1.3.2. of the EUAA COI Report Syria: Country Focus (March 2025).

- 304

  France24, In Syria's Alawite area, joy at Assad fall but fear of Islamism, 16 December 2024, url

- 305

  Shahin, K., The Existential Challenge for Syria’s Alawites, NLM, 12 May 2025, url

- 306

  Security Council Report, Syria: April 2025 Monthly Forecast, 31 March 2025, url

- 307

  SNHR, Preliminary Report on the Violations that Took Place in the Wake of the Attacks Carried Out by Non-State Armed Groups Linked to the Assad Regime, Mostly in the Governorates of Latakia, Tartus, and Hama, 11 March 2025, url, pp. 5-10

- 308

  SNHR, 1,562 Deaths, Including 102 Children and 99 Women, as well as 33 Medical Personnel, Recorded in March 2025 in Syria, 9 April 2025, url, p. 2

- 309

  AP, Syria's worst violence in months reopens wounds of the civil war, 10 March 2025, url; International Crisis Group, Finding a Path through a Perilous Moment for Post-Assad Syria, 10 March 2025, url

- 310

  SNHR, 1,562 Deaths, Including 102 Children and 99 Women, as well as 33 Medical Personnel, Recorded in March 2025 in Syria, 9 April 2025, url, p. 2

- 311

  Zelin, A., Syria's Transitional Honeymoon Is Over After Massacres and Disinformation, TWI, 10 March 2025, url

- 312

  Etana Syria, Brief: Armed Clashes & Sectarian Violence on Syria's Coast, 25 March 2025, url; SJAC, SJAC's Analysis of Atrocities Committed in Latakia and Tartous, 13 March 2025, url

- 313

  SJAC, SJAC's Analysis of Atrocities Committed in Latakia and Tartous, 13 March 2025, url; Zelin, A., Syria's Transitional Honeymoon Is Over After Massacres and Disinformation, TWI, 10 March 2025, url

- 314

  Zelin, A., Syria's Transitional Honeymoon Is Over After Massacres and Disinformation, TWI, 10 March 2025, url

- 315

  USDOD, Lead IG Report to the U.S. Congress January 1, 2025 – March 31, 2025, 29 April 2025, url, pp. 22-23

- 316316

AI, Syria: Coastal massacres of Alawite civilians must be investigated as war crimes, 3 April 2025, url

- 317

SJAC, SJAC’s Analysis of Atrocities Committed in Latakia and Tartous, 13 March 2025, url

- 319

SJAC, SJAC’s Analysis of Atrocities Committed in Latakia and Tartous, 13 March 2025, url; International Crisis Group, Finding a Path through a Perilous Moment for Post-Assad Syria, 10 March 2025, url

- 320

UNOCHA, Syria Situation Report No.4 as of 26 March 2025, 27 March 2025, url, p. 2

- 321

France24, Syria opens probe into killings targeting Alawite minority group, 9 March 2025, url

- 322

ISW and CT, Iran Update, 11 March 2025, url

- 323

Security Council Report, Syria: May 2025 Monthly Forecast, 30 April 2025, url

- 324

MEE, One month on, killings persist in Syria’s Alawi heartlands, 11 April 2025, url; Syria Direct, Extrajudicial killings of Alawites plague Homs city, 9 May 2025, url

- 325

SJAC, The Syrian Government Must Investigate the Targeting of Alawite Civilians in Homs, 13 May 2025, url; International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch Syria April 2025, n.d., url

- 326

Syria Direct, Extrajudicial killings of Alawites plague Homs city, 9 May 2025, url

- 327

MEE, One month on, killings persist in Syria’s Alawi heartlands, 11 April 2025, url

- 328

SNHR, No Fewer than 20 Civilians Extrajudicial Killed in Homs City Between April 23-28, 2025, 30 April 2025, url

- 329

SJAC, The Syrian Government Must Investigate the Targeting of Alawite Civilians in Homs, 13 May 2025, url

- 330

SJAC, The Syrian Government Must Investigate the Targeting of Alawite Civilians in Homs, 13 May 2025, url

- 331

SJAC, The Syrian Government Must Investigate the Targeting of Alawite Civilians in Homs, 13 May 2025, url

- 332

SJAC, The Syrian Government Must Investigate the Targeting of Alawite Civilians in Homs, 13 May 2025, url; International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch Syria April 2025, n.d., url

- 333

SOHR, Absence of law deterrence | 50 Alawite women missing since beginning of 2025, 18 April 2025, url

- 334

Le Monde, En Syrie, l'inquiétante disparition de femmes alaouites [In Syria, the worrying disappearance of Alawite women], 29 April 2025, url

- 335

UN News, Situation in Syria 'Extremely Fragile', UN Envoy Tells Security Council, Stressing Rule of Law, New Social Contract, Fair Elections Are Yet to Materialize, 25 April 2025, url

- 336

Balanche, F., Alawites Under Threat in Syria?, TWI, 31 December 2024, url

- 337

Davis, H., How Desperation Sowed the Seeds of Rebellion in Syria's Latakia Province, New Lines Magazine, 17 March 2025, url

- 338

Balanche, F., Alawites Under Threat in Syria?, TWI, 31 December 2024, url

- 339

Balanche, F., Alawites Under Threat in Syria?, TWI, 31 December 2024, url

- 340

  Anjarini, S., Investigating the Alawite Massacres, New Lines Magazine, 12 May 2025, url

- 341

  STJ, Mass Dismissals in Syria After the Regime’s Fall, 13 May 2025, url, p. 7

- 342

  International Crisis Group, Finding a Path through a Perilous Moment for Post-Assad Syria, 10 March 2025, url

- 343

  International Crisis Group, Finding a Path through a Perilous Moment for Post-Assad Syria, 10 March 2025, url; STJ, Mass Dismissals in Syria After the Regime’s Fall, 13 May 2025, url, pp. 4, 9; Anjarini, S., Investigating the Alawite Massacres, New Lines Magazine, 12 May 2025, url

- 344

  Anjarini, S., Investigating the Alawite Massacres, New Lines Magazine, 12 May 2025, url

- 345

  International Crisis Group, The New Syria: Halting a Dangerous Drift, 28 March 2025, url

- 346

  International Crisis Group, Finding a Path through a Perilous Moment for Post-Assad Syria, 10 March 2025, url

- 347

  Reuters, Minutes to leave: Syria's Alawites evicted from private homes at gunpoint, 29 April 2025, url

- 348

  Economist (The), The warlords of Syria have a daunting to-do list, 25 April 2025, url

- 349

  STJ, STJ Submits Report on Cases of Home Seizures and Arbitrary Evictions of Homeowners in Muadamiyat al-Sham in Damascus Countryside, 18 April 2025, url

- 350

  UNHCR, Regional Flash Update #26 - Syria Situation Crisis, 9 May 2025, url, p. 2

- 351

  Reuters, Minutes to leave: Syria's Alawites evicted from private homes at gunpoint, 29 April 2025, url

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