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2.4.5. Christians

Before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Christian communities constituted approximately 10 % of the country's population.[419] The civil war led to widespread displacement and emigration among Christian communities, many of whom moved to Lebanon or the Western countries,[420] particularly to Europe.[421] There is no official data on the current number of Christians remaining in Syria,[422] with some estimates suggesting a decline to 2 % [423] or approximately 300 000.[424]

Syrian Christian denominations comprise several churches, such as Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Syrian Catholic, Maronite, Protestant, Nestorian, Latin, and Chaldean.[425] Prior to the war, Greek Orthodox Christians and Greek Catholics predominantly resided in and around Damascus as well as in Latakia and its coastal region. Syrian Orthodox Christians were primarily located in the Jazira region, Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus, while Syrian Catholics had small communities, particularly in Aleppo, Hasaka, and Damascus. Armenian Christians of various denominations were largely residing in Aleppo, with some communities found in Damascus and the Jazira region.[426]

After the fall of the Assad government, Christian communities expressed concerns about religious freedom, safety, and the ability to practice their faith openly.[427] Additional concerns have been linked to limited inclusion in shaping the new constitution and potential restrictions on societal freedoms, such as interim government's[428] move to close bars in Damascus[429] in March 2025, which was reversed within a week. In the new government, Hind Kabawat, Christian and a woman, was appointed as minister of social affairs and labour.[430]

In December 2024, several incidents involving attacks on Christian symbols were reported.[431] The new government condemned these attacks and attributed them to 'unknown individuals.' [432] There were no reported incidents of violence during the 2025 Easter celebrations.[433] In Damascus, the government forces reportedly provided security for the festivities.[434] However, as noted by the head of a community committee at the Armenian church to The New York Times, it was unclear whether Christians throughout Syria experienced the same level of freedom to celebrate Easter as those in Damascus, where the new government's support for Easter celebrations might have been aimed at projecting an image of tolerance to journalists and visitors.[435]

At the end of March 2025, the Syrian Observer reported on increased religious proselytisation in public spaces, often referred to as ‘calls to Islam’. They included posters and street preaching promoting modest dress and broadcasting of religious messages with loudspeakers. Vehicles promoting Islam reportedly toured Christian-majority neighbourhoods of Damascus like Bab Touma, Bab Sharqi, Qassa, and Dweila. Responding to a Christian cleric’s complaint, authorities condemned the actions as ‘unofficial’ and ‘individual’, claiming arrests were made and encouraging further reports – though another car was seen again in Dweilaa some days later.[436]

In interviews to media outlets, various Christian figures highlighted a sense of uncertainty and fear.[437] In March 2025, Syrian Orthodox theologian Assad Elias Kattan noted to Deutsche Welle fears of Islamisation and described the political transition as chaotic and the security situation outside Damascus as ‘not always stable.’[438] The same month, writer and researcher Roger Asfar told the Syrian Observer that the threat to the Christian presence in Syria was increasing under the new government, as Christians faced ‘diminishing freedoms and growing religious and societal pressure’, with no signs of improvement in their situation.[439] As noted by the head of the Armenian church’s executive committee in an interview with the New York Times, many Armenians were considering leaving Syria due to fear about the future.[440] Similarly, in May 2025, a Catholic priest in Aleppo noted to Vatican News that Christians remained cautious and wished to ensure that the right of every community 'to live in dignity' would be respected.’[441]

○ (a) Security incidents involving Christians

In March 2025, Christians were caught in the crossfire during attacks on Alawites in the coastal region. AFP journalists were able to confirm at least seven obituaries shared on social media, including for a man and his son reportedly shot while travelling to Latakia, four family members killed in their home ‘in an Alawite-majority neighbourhood of the city’, and the father of a priest killed in Baniyas.[442] Following the attacks on Alawites, local fears have reportedly grown due to the new authorities’ inability to ensure protection.[443] As noted by several sources, after the attacks, Christians in predominantly Christian areas of Damascus formed volunteer groups to defend their neighbourhoods against looting[444] and to protect Christian religious sites from potential attacks.[445]

In early May 2025, a group of unidentified men attacked an alcohol shop in the predominantly Christian town of Rablah in Al-Qusayr district of Homs, assaulting a young man, looting the shop, and directing insults and threats at the town's Chistian residents.446

In mid-May 2025, the media outlet Syriac Press reported two incidents concerning Christians in Hama governorate. On 15 May, a car owned by a Christian family was set on fire in Hemto town, with leaflets threatening and insulting Christians left at the scene. Three days later, in the predominantly Christian town of Maharda, northwest of Hemto, an armed group reportedly marched throughout the streets chanting 'Our eternal leader is Prophet Muhammad,' which was interpreted by many Christian residents as a deliberate act of intimidation.447

On 22 June 2025, a man allegedly affiliated with ISIL opened fire and detonated an explosive vest during a Sunday service at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Prophet Elias (Mar Elias Church) in Damascus's Dweila neighbourhood,448 killing 25 and injuring 60 people.449

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