



2.7.4. Christians

Christians in Syria are mainly concentrated in major urban centres such as Damascus,[630](#) Aleppo, and the governorate of Hama,[631](#) with an estimated community also present in Sweida (around 30 000).[632](#) Although hosting around 3 000 Christian families, Aleppo is not considered as a major Christian centre, compared with approximately 20 000 families in Wadi al Nasara in Homs Governorate.[633](#) Before 2011, Christians made up approximately 10 % of the population,[634](#) but the civil war led to significant displacement and emigration, particularly to Lebanon and Western countries,[635](#) including Europe.[636](#) While there is no official current figure,[637](#) estimates suggest the Christian population has declined to around 2 %[638](#) (or approximately 300 000[639](#)), as over 75 % have left the country since the onset of the civil conflict.[640](#)

Syrian Christians comprise several denominations, including Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, Maronite, Protestant, Nestorian, Latin, and Chaldean churches.[641](#) Prior to the war, these communities were geographically dispersed: Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics mainly in and around Damascus, Latakia, and the coastal region; Syriac Orthodox communities in the Jazira region, Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus; Syriac Catholics in smaller communities in Aleppo, Hasaka, and Damascus; and Armenian Christians largely concentrated in Aleppo, with additional communities in Damascus and the Jazira region.[642](#)

Historically, Christians in Syria were subject to an implicit social contract with the state, whereby political neutrality was exchanged for the freedom to practise their faith. Under the Assad regime, this arrangement allowed Christians to live openly and access public services while remaining largely politically inactive. Transitional authorities have also largely refrained from targeting Christians for political reasons. Unlike some other minority groups, Christian leaders had not publicly demanded a role in shaping the country's future governance.[643](#) Despite some Christian leaders actively engaging with the transitional authorities,[644](#) Christian communities largely remain politically marginal as their leaders exercise influence primarily through religious institutions rather than direct representation.[645](#)

Sources interviewed by DIS reported that when HTS took control of Damascus in December 2024, many Christians initially believed the group to be ISIL. This perception contributed to a persistent atmosphere of fear, unease, and distrust towards the authorities, accompanied by concerns regarding the future.[646](#)

Despite such fears, following the fall of the Assad government, the Directorate of Minority Affairs stated that Christians would remain protected under the transitional authorities. Early engagement with the new government included meetings between Christian leaders from

various denominations and the interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa. In October 2025, the President visited the Mariamite Church in Old Damascus and met with Patriarch John X Yazigi, during which both sides reaffirmed their commitment to safeguarding Syrian Christianity and supporting the state,⁶⁴⁷ describing it as a ‘shared commitment to strengthening national values and promoting unity among all citizens’.⁶⁴⁸ Despite the attempts to reassure religious minorities by the transitional authorities, the draft constitution defines Islam as the ‘primary source’ of legislation although explicitly recognising freedom of belief only for ‘divine religions’—Christianity and Judaism—excluding groups such as the Yazidi faith.⁶⁴⁹

Sectarian violence, including the killing of hundreds of mostly Alawite civilians in March 2025 and the clashes that erupted in the Druze-majority governorate of Sweida in July, fuelled fears among minority communities, particularly Christians.⁶⁵⁰ Moreover, localised disputes escalated into broader clashes between Muslim and Christian communities,⁶⁵¹ fuelling insecurity and leading to the cancellation of certain religious celebrations.⁶⁵² For instance, disputes between Christian residents of Suqaylabiyah (Hama governorate) and neighbouring Sunni communities had been ongoing⁶⁵³ but were exacerbated by the town's frontline position during the war. Local militias from Suqaylabiyah were accused of abuses against nearby Sunni villages during the conflict,⁶⁵⁴ while Christians from the town reportedly faced harassment from residents of neighbouring communities.⁶⁵⁵ Following the fall of the Assad regime, tensions reportedly intensified as some members of neighbouring Sunni communities expressed hostility towards those perceived as having been aligned with the former government.⁶⁵⁶ Earlier sectarian tensions were also reported in December 2024, when a public Christmas tree in Suqaylabiyah was set on fire.⁶⁵⁷

Local measures restricting alcohol in Damascus also generated unease, with aspects of their implementation perceived by some as stigmatising communities and affecting personal freedoms.⁶⁵⁸ At the same time, authorities sought to reassure Christian communities, including through public outreach by the Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and security measures implemented by the MoI during Easter celebrations.⁶⁵⁹

Christians are generally able to live openly and practise their religion,⁶⁶⁰ with access to public services and employment in the public sector.⁶⁶¹ In major cities such as Damascus and Aleppo, Christians are able to express their faith and benefit from comparatively better employment opportunities. By contrast, in rural areas, living openly as Christians was more challenging, and livelihood opportunities were more limited.⁶⁶²

In October 2025, church schools in areas formerly controlled by the SDF were temporarily closed due to administrative disputes with local authorities over the use of the official Syrian government curriculum.⁶⁶³ By November 2025, the schools had reopened and were permitted to continue teaching the Syrian Ministry of Education’s curriculum for the 2025–2026 academic year.⁶⁶⁴

Security incidents involving Christians

Although Christians in Syria continued to live openly, they reportedly experience sporadic targeted incidents,⁶⁶⁵ often in the context of broader local insecurity affecting multiple communities.⁶⁶⁶ In June 2025, a suicide bombing targeted the Greek Orthodox Mar St. Elias

Church in Damascus,[667](#) killing at least 27 people and injuring more than 60. Authorities initially attributed the attack to ISIL, while the group Saraya Ansar al-Sunna (SAS), which is ideologically aligned with ISIL, later claimed responsibility.[668](#) The group stated that the attack was carried out in response to government restrictions on unapproved proselytisation in the area.[669](#) Following the incident, Christian leaders and community members called for stronger protection and accountability, stating that earlier threats and incidents had not been adequately addressed by the authorities.[670](#) During the July 2025 violence in Sweida, at least four Christian churches in villages with large Druze populations were reportedly looted and vandalised, with three of them also burned.[671](#)

Kidnappings in predominantly Christian areas, such as in Wadi al-Nasara in rural Homs,[672](#) have been reported, although some cases have later been identified as misinformation.[673](#) An investigation by the MoI found that only one out of 42 reported cases involved a confirmed kidnapping. However, eyewitness accounts and statements from local security actors indicated that kidnappings did occur across multiple communities and that they were not limited to Christians. These incidents were typically driven by motives such as financial extortion, personal revenge, or general criminal activity, and affect Sunni, Alawites, and Christian populations alike.[674](#)

A high-profile Christian church leader interviewed by DIS noted that Christians were not specifically targeted because of their faith, but rather because they were often perceived as relatively wealthy and that kidnappings were not exclusive to Christian communities. He however noted that efforts by the local church to secure government protection in Wadi al Nasara have been unsuccessful. Although the government approved the recruitment of 200 local volunteers into its security forces, the agreement was reportedly never implemented, leaving the area without effective government protection.[675](#) According to researcher Aaron Y. Zelin, despite recorded incidents, the majority of Christians in Syria had not been directly targeted. Churches in government-controlled areas are generally provided with security by the authorities. Therefore, based on the same source, security risks for Christians should be understood within the broader context of overall instability and insecurity affecting all communities in Syria.[676](#)

One confidential source interviewed by Landinfo and the Swedish Migration Agency alleged that Christians in and around Homs had been subjected to killings, kidnappings, threats and other abuses. The source further claimed that some perpetrators wore General Security Service uniforms, while acknowledging uncertainty regarding their identity and any possible connection to the authorities.[677](#) However, no other sources could not be found to corroborate this information.

In October 2025, in Anaz village, rural Homs governorate, four masked gunmen, allegedly in General Security Service uniforms,[678](#) opened fire on young Christian men, killing two and critically injuring a third one.[679](#)

In February 2026, the Assyrian Monitor for Human Rights (AMHR) reported intimidation incidents in Qatana, a suburb of Damascus, including vehicles driving through predominantly Christian neighbourhoods while broadcasting Quranic verses.[680](#) In February 2026, in the predominantly Christian town of Saidnaya, north of Damascus, a number of young men removed the Syrian flag from the main square and raised the 'Islamic Tawhid' banner in its place, amid chants of 'Allahu

Akbar'. The move was described by several residents as a direct provocation to the feelings of the town's inhabitants.[681](#) In the same month, a resident of Al-Qusayr in Homs governorate narrowly survived an assassination attempt when two gunmen on a motorcycle fired at his car in front of his home.[682](#)

In March 2026, an argument between two men in the predominantly Christian town of Suqaylabiyah in Hama governorate led to sectarian attacks that caused widespread damage to homes, shops and cars.[683](#) Several sources reported that a large number of masked gunmen, coming from Qalaat al-Madiq and neighbouring villages, attacked civilians and vandalised property.[684](#) The official SANA news agency, however, stated that security forces intervened to break up a 'mass brawl' and that calm was restored following a number of arrests.[685](#) Following the attack, as a consequence, the Easter celebrations were limited to prayers only inside the churches, as stated by the Greek Catholic Patriarchate in Antioch and the East.[686](#) During the Syrian conflict, the predominantly Christian town of Suqaylabiyah remained under the control of government-aligned forces, while nearby Sunni-majority Qalaat al-Madiq was held by opposition groups,[687](#) contributing to heightened tensions between the two communities.[688](#) Earlier sectarian tensions were also reported in December 2024, when a public Christmas tree in Suqaylabiyah was set on fire.[689](#)

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