Nearly 1,000 Civilians Killed in Syria, Rights Group Says: "Massacres"

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At least 973 civilians, including women and children, have been killed in Syria in recent days as forces of the new administration seek to crush loyalists of former President [Bashar al-Assad](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/bashar-al-assad), according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR).

The Syrian defense ministry announced the end of military operations, saying they had been successful.

*Newsweek* contacted the office of Syria's prime minister for comment.

**Why it Matters**

The killings have raised concerns within and outside Syria over prospects for the country under the Sunni Islamist Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which is now in control under Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former [Al-Qaeda](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/al-qaeda) affiliate.

U.S. Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/marco-rubio) condemned what he described as terrorist attacks on religious minorities, urging Syrian authorities to hold the perpetrators accountable.

High casualties have been reported among religious minorities, including Assad's fellow Alawites and Christians.

**What To Know**

Most civilian casualties occurred in the governorate of Latakia, followed by Tartus, as well as in Hama and Homs, according to SOHR.

"These crimes come as part of a large-scale retaliatory campaign targeting members of the Alawite sect, amid ongoing mass killings, house burnings, and forced displacement, all while there is a lack of international intervention to stop these massacres," the UK-based NGO said in a report Monday.

On Thursday, Syrian government forces and pro-Assad forces clashed in the coastal area of Jableh, a predominantly Alawite region. On Saturday, SOHR reported at least 428 Alawite deaths, in addition to 125 government security forces and 148 pro-Assad fighters killed.

"Our forces successfully neutralized the security cells and remnants of the fallen regime in the town of Al-Mukhtariya, the town of Al-Muzayra, the Al-Zoubar area, and others in the Latakia governorate, as well as the towns of Al-Daliya, Ta'anita, and Qadmous in the Tartus governorate, which resulted in thwarting the threats and securing the area," Syrian Defense Ministry spokesperson Hassan Abdulghani said Monday, according to the Syrian News Agency SANA.

Syria has been mired in conflict for more than a decade, complicated by the involvement of foreign powers. In December 2024, the Assad regime, which had been supported by Russia, Iran and Iranian-backed Hezbollah, fell to a rapid offensive by Turkish-backed HTS forces.

**What People Are Saying**

**Syrian Interim Government President Ahmed Al-Sharaa**: "Today, as we stand in this decisive moment, we find ourselves in front of a new danger, represented in attempts by loyalists of the ousted regime, backed by external entities, to create a new strife and drag our country to a civil war, with the aim of dividing it and destroying its unity and stability. We assure that we will firmly hold accountable anyone involved in civilians' bloodshed, overstepped state authority or misused power for personal gains."

**U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk**: "We are receiving extremely disturbing reports of entire families, including women, children and hors de combat fighters, being killed. There must be prompt, transparent and impartial investigations into all the killings and other violations, and those responsible must be held to account, in line with international law norms and standards. Groups terrorising civilians must also be held accountable."

**Director of Policy Analysis Department at Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies Samir Alabdullah**, told *Newsweek*: "The violence was driven by both internal and external factors. Facing pressure from Al-Sharaa's government, the Alawites aimed to seize control of Jableh. The government responded by mobilizing forces, resulting in civilian casualties. This was part of a Russian-Iranian effort to stir the pot in Syria and create chaos, hoping to shift international views on the new government. Unfortunately, some Alawites became pawns in this strategy, causing devastation in their own regions."

**What Happens Next**

The intensity of the battles appears to have decreased but the situation remains tense, raising concerns of escalating violence.