



Federation of Alawites in Europe (AAAF)

Report on the Situation of the Alawites in Syria

**Following the Takeover by the Islamist-Jihadist
Organization Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)**

December 2024 – January 2025 (As of January 14, 2025)

"In light of the alarming humanitarian crisis in Syria, we call on the international community and relevant institutions to act decisively and with sensitivity to alleviate human suffering. The current circumstances are marked by genocidal actions and targeted massacres, particularly affecting the Alawites, and demand urgent intervention."

Introduction

Dear Members of the Federal Government, Representatives of Political Parties, Human Rights Organizations, Journalists, Media Outlets, Experts on International Human Rights, Scholars, Religious and Cultural Institutions, and the International Public,

The Alawite community in Syria stands on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. As a people who have been inseparably linked to the history and culture of Syria for centuries, the Alawite population now faces an existential threat that seeks not only their physical annihilation but also the erasure of their cultural and religious identity.

Following the collapse of the Assad regime and the disintegration of state structures, an atmosphere of systematic persecution has emerged, deliberately targeting the destruction of the Alawites. This is a calculated strategy of ethno-religious cleansing, manifesting in an unprecedented wave of violence. Armed groups and militias employ massacres, mass arrests, and targeted executions to break the community. Religious sites are desecrated, villages razed to the ground, and innocent civilians – men, women, and children – fall victim to brutal crimes that can only be described as atrocities against humanity.

The reports we receive are harrowing: mothers forced to witness the execution of their children, entire families disappearing in makeshift detention camps with no hope of return, and villages wiped out within hours. The strategy behind this persecution is clear: destruction through fear, annihilation through terror.

These alarming developments must not leave the international community unmoved. The Alawites are enduring not only a humanitarian crisis but also a genocidal reality that we cannot ignore or downplay. The international community bears a moral and legal responsibility to stand by these people.

This report is not merely a documentation of suffering. It is a cry for help, an urgent appeal to all who uphold the principles of humanity and international law. It is our duty to take concrete action to protect the lives and dignity of the Alawite community. The perpetrators of these atrocities must

be brought to justice, the violence must be stopped, and the security of this endangered community must be ensured.

History will judge us by how we act in this moment. Let us not allow the Alawites to feel abandoned in their darkest hour. Now is the time to act boldly – for humanity, for justice, for life.

Religious Fatwas and Their Role in the Marginalization of the Alawites

The exact wording of historical fatwas against the Alawites is not always fully documented in the sources. However, some key statements exist that illustrate the stance of Islamist/Salafist scholars towards the Alawites.

In the 14th century, the Hanbali scholar Ibn Taimiyya, an influential representative of the Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence, issued several fatwas in which he referred to the Alawites as heretics and unbelievers. He regarded them as a dangerous deviation from Islam and called for measures against them. In one of his central works, he stated:

“This group (the Alawites) are greater unbelievers than the Jews and Christians; indeed, they are greater unbelievers than many polytheists, and their harm to the community of Muhammad is greater than the harm of the unbelievers (Tatars, unbelieving Europeans, and others) who are at war with us (Muslims).”

The views of Ibn Taymiyya are recorded in his work Majmu' al-Fatawa (Collection of Legal Opinions), a compilation of his theological and legal rulings. This work remains one of the central references for many conservative and Islamist movements to this day.

Centuries later, in 2013, the Egyptian scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an influential and controversial figure in contemporary political Islam, expressed similar views. Al-Qaradawi called on ***“every Sunni Muslim with military training to fight against Shiites and Alawites in Syria.”*** This occurred in the context of the Syrian civil war, where Alawites, due to their shared faith with President Bashar al-Assad, were often mistakenly perceived as his supporters and thus played a central role in how the conflict was perceived. Al-Qaradawi stated that the Alawites were

“more unbelieving than the Jews,” a declaration that revived the centuries-old religious hostility toward this community and further entrenched their political and religious exclusion.

These modern fatwas, aimed at fostering religious and political confrontation in the region, reflect the historical tradition of fatwas that regarded the Alawites as being outside the Islamic community. The fatwa-based judgments against the Alawites carry not only a religious but also a political dimension. They serve as justification for social exclusion, violence, and political marginalization.

The fatwas of Ibn Taymiyya and al-Qaradawi exemplify the enduring significance of religious rulings, which, over centuries, have shaped the perception of the Alawites in the Muslim world and fostered their marginalization in both religious and political contexts.

These and similar fatwas issued by such hardliners undermine coexistence and peaceful relations among religious communities, both within the Islamic community (Sunnis, Shias, Alawites, etc.) and in the broader Middle East (Christians, Yazidis, Jews, etc.).

Crimes Against Alawites in the Syrian Civil War: The Role of HTS and Its Predecessors

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the Alawite community has been repeatedly subjected to targeted attacks and systematic persecution. With the collapse of state structures and the increasing dominance of Islamist-jihadist groups such as today’s Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the violence against Alawites has escalated dramatically.

Today, the Alawite community faces an existential threat that has reached alarming proportions with the consolidation of HTS’s rule. These crimes are not isolated acts of violence but are part of a strategic and targeted campaign of ethno-religious cleansing systematically implemented over the years.

The following timeline highlights the most severe crimes committed by HTS and its predecessor organizations against the Alawite community, underscoring the continuity of this threat to the present day. It also emphasizes the urgent need for the international community to act immediately to prevent further massacres or even genocide.

- ***Massacre of Aqrab (December 11, 2012):***

In the mixed town of Aqrab in Hama Governorate, between 125 and 300 people, primarily Alawites, were killed or injured. The exact circumstances and perpetrators remain disputed, but many reports point to opposition forces, possibly involving Jabhat al-Nusra, a predecessor of HTS.

- ***Attacks on Alawite Villages in Latakia Region (August 2013):***

Islamist rebels, including Jabhat al-Nusra, attacked several Alawite villages, killing at least 190 civilians and abducting numerous women and children. (Jabhat al-Nusra, now HTS)

- ***Massacre in Maan (February 9, 2014):***

Fighters from the Islamist group Jund al-Aqsa attacked the Alawite village of Maan in Hama Governorate, killing at least 21 civilians, including women and children. Another 20 pro-government militiamen were also killed. (Jund al-Aqsa, no direct link to HTS, but known to collaborate with Jabhat al-Nusra)

- ***Massacre of Eshtabraq (April 25, 2015):***

After capturing Jisr al-Shughour, Jabhat al-Nusra fighters entered the Alawite village of Eshtabraq, killing over 200 Alawites, many in brutal ways. (Jabhat al-Nusra, now HTS)

- ***Attack on Zara'a (May 12, 2016):***

Rebels, led by Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham, attacked the Alawite village of Zara'a in Hama Governorate, killing at least 19 civilians and abducting up to 70 people, including women and children. (Jabhat al-Nusra, now HTS)

- ***Bombings in Jableh and Tartus (May 23, 2016):***

A series of bombings in the predominantly Alawite cities of Jableh and Tartus resulted in at least 184 deaths. These attacks were attributed to the Islamic State (IS), though some IS fighters later joined HTS. (IS, with some members later transitioning to HTS)

Documented Crimes Against Humanity

The Alawites, a religious minority and an integral part of Syrian society, have been the target of systematic violence and oppression for years. These crimes not only threaten their physical survival but also aim to obliterate their cultural and religious identity. The following summary outlines documented crimes against humanity from December 2024 to January 2025 (as of January 9, 2025), perpetrated specifically against this endangered community. This overview reveals the alarming dimensions of suffering and injustice faced by the Alawites.

Massacres and Targeted Attacks on Civilians

Massacres against the Alawite community have tragically become a hallmark of their persecution. In numerous cases, entire villages have been attacked, their inhabitants massacred in large numbers, the settlements destroyed – a cruel strategy of physical and psychological annihilation.

Massacre in Homs

One of the most harrowing examples is the massacre in Homs, which by January 5, 2025, had claimed over 90 lives, including many women and children. The assailants, armed groups with access to heavy weaponry, employed not only firearms but also explosives and incendiary weapons to inflict maximum suffering and destruction. Entire families were trapped in their homes and burned alive, while attackers systematically ensured no one could escape.

Eyewitness accounts describe a methodical approach: escape routes were blocked, houses were destroyed with explosives, and survivors were assaulted with firearms and flamethrowers. The perpetrators made no distinction between men, women, and children – the clear objective was the annihilation of the entire community.

Attack on Alawite Villages in Hama Region

On December 7, 2024, armed groups launched a large-scale attack on several Alawite villages in the Hama region, including Rabiah and Zaghbah. Many villagers who were unable to flee were captured, tortured, and brutally murdered. Eyewitnesses reported systematic killings; numerous victims were shot, while others were burned alive. The victims included men, women, children, and the elderly.

Dozens of homes were set ablaze, forcing the Alawite community to permanently abandon these areas. These events highlight a deliberate strategy of ethno-religious displacement.

Assassination of Clerics and Farmers

January 7, 2025: Killing of Clerics

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, three Alawite clerics were killed by unknown gunmen on the Tartus-Damascus highway.

January 8, 2025: Targeted Murder of Sheikh Ali Deeb Abu Rami and Wife

Sheikh Ali Deeb Abu Rami (aged 65) and his wife were abducted from the village of Danibah. Their bodies were discovered on January 8, 2025, on a roadside near the village of Sanidah. This incident sparked widespread outrage and condemnation across the region.

January 8, 2025: Killing of Farmers in Ain Sharqia

In the village of Ain Sharqia, Latakia Province, three Alawite farmers, including a child, were killed by foreign Islamist fighters allied with the new Syrian authorities. The victims, all members of the same family, were attacked while working in their fields. Thousands gathered on January 9, 2025, to mourn the victims during their burial.

Mass Arrests, Torture, and Targeted Killings

Escalation since December 2024

The persecution of Alawites by various armed groups, particularly militant groups like Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), has intensified significantly in recent years.

In Homs, where approximately 15% of the population is Alawite, around 3,000 young Alawite men were reportedly abducted by HTS and other armed factions between December 2024 and January 2025. Most of these men were killed after enduring severe torture, according to eyewitness accounts.

The torture protocols detail unimaginable cruelty: electrocution, nail extraction, bone crushing, and other inhumane methods. Survivors reported being interrogated under conditions of extreme deprivation, with insufficient food and water.

Destruction of Religious and Cultural Sites

A central aspect of the persecution of the Alawites in Syria is the systematic destruction of their religious and cultural sites. These attacks aim not only to physically displace the Alawites but also to erase their identity and history. Religious sites are not merely places of worship; they form the foundation of Alawite culture and identity. Their loss represents a profound spiritual and cultural wound that far exceeds the material damage.

A particularly devastating incident occurred at the end of November 2024 when the Al-Khasibi Shrine in Aleppo, one of the holiest religious centers of the Alawites, was overrun by fighters ideologically aligned with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an Islamist-jihadist group. The attackers set the shrine on fire and killed five unarmed volunteer guards who had tried to protect the sacred site. This heinous crime was filmed and disseminated on social media to publicly desecrate the Alawites' religious symbols and humiliate their community.

In the Latakia region, a historical stronghold of Alawite culture, numerous religious and cultural sites have also been destroyed. These include mausoleums, historic libraries, and other buildings central to the identity and centuries-old traditions of the Alawites. This destruction was not random – it was a deliberate strategy to uproot the cultural foundations of the Alawites and strip them of their spiritual and historical grounding.

The attack on the Al-Khasibi Shrine is much more than a religious loss. It represents a symbolic assault on the entire Alawite identity. Along with the destruction of the shrine, valuable historical records and religious texts, integral to the community's cultural heritage, were also lost. Many Alawites report a deep sense of alienation as their history is not only physically destroyed but also systematically erased from public and religious archives.

Violence Against Peaceful Protests

On December 28, 2024, Alawites in several Syrian cities – including Homs, Latakia, and Tartus – took a courageous step to protest the continued persecution of their community and the acts of violence against their civilians. These protests, which were predominantly peaceful, aimed to highlight the injustices faced by the Alawites over the years. However, the response from security forces and various armed groups was brutal and ruthless.

In Latakia and Homs, the violence escalated significantly. Eyewitnesses report targeted attacks on protesters, with snipers and heavy ammunition used to suppress the demonstrations. The death toll is shocking: more than 30 protesters were killed, and numerous others sustained severe injuries. Many arrested protesters were subjected to severe torture, with some dying from their injuries before reaching any judicial process.

The scenes of violence were not only devastating locally but also drew international attention. Videos and reports circulated on social media and international news outlets documented the full extent of the brutality. These recordings revealed not only the use of deadly force but also the systematic suppression of a community desperately seeking justice and recognition.

The suppression of these protests is not just an attack on the Alawite community but also a violation of the fundamental human right to free expression and peaceful assembly. The acts of violence on December 28 once again highlight that the persecution of the Alawites is not merely a humanitarian crisis but a deliberate campaign against a community increasingly pushed to the brink of extinction in Syria.

Abuse and Torture in Prisons

The systematic torture of Alawite prisoners by armed groups and militias reveals yet another harrowing dimension of the persecution. Men and women held in secret prisons are subjected to horrific abuse designed to strip them entirely of their humanity.

Numerous eyewitness reports and video footage document the inhumane conditions under which the Alawites are detained. In an abhorrent attempt to humiliate them, prisoners were forced to strip in front of other detainees. These acts were used not only as a means of physical violence but also as a method of psychological subjugation. Particularly degrading are reports of prisoners being forced to imitate animal sounds while enduring humiliating beatings – a form of dehumanization that exposes the depths of cruelty.

A particularly shocking example is a prison near Idlib, where dozens of Alawites were held under extreme conditions. Survivors describe unbearably brutal torture techniques: electric shocks, the extraction of fingernails, and constant psychological abuse were part of their daily lives. Many prisoners did not survive these ordeals. However, even after death, the cruelty continued: their bodies were publicly displayed as a form of intimidation and humiliation.

Massacres and Targeted Attacks on Civilians

Massacres of the Alawite community have tragically become a brutal hallmark of their persecution. In numerous instances, entire villages have been attacked, their inhabitants murdered in large numbers, and the settlements destroyed – a cruel strategy of physical and psychological annihilation.

One of the most devastating examples is the massacre in Homs, which claimed over 90 lives by January 5, 2025, including many women and children. The attackers, armed groups with access to heavy weaponry, used not only firearms but also explosives and incendiary weapons to inflict extreme suffering and destruction. Entire families were trapped in their homes and burned alive, while the attackers systematically ensured no one could escape.

Eyewitnesses describe a calculated approach: escape routes were blocked, houses were destroyed with explosives, and survivors were attacked with firearms and flamethrowers. The perpetrators made no distinction between men, women, and children – the clear objective was the extermination of the entire community.

These massacres are more than mere acts of violence – they are a deliberate tool of ethnic and religious cleansing. Their aim is to drive the Alawites out of their ancestral lands and completely eradicate their physical existence.

Violence Against Alawite Women

The women of the Alawite community face not only physical violence but also targeted sexual violence designed to dehumanize them and symbolically attack the entire community. Reports confirm that Alawite women are often abused as "trophy" of war – a cruel instrument that combines physical suffering and psychological destruction.

Women in these attacks are systematically raped, enslaved, and often forced to undress in front of their tormentors. These forms of sexual humiliation serve not only to suppress individuals but are part of a broader strategy to destroy the psychological stability and cultural identity of the Alawites.

A particularly shocking example occurred in the Latakia region, where militias abducted Alawite women and girls during targeted raids to abuse them. These assaults were not accidental byproducts of war – they were deliberate acts meant to break the community psychologically and publicly shame the victims, amplifying the symbolic impact of the attacks.

In areas controlled by militias like HTS, sexual violence is systematically used to attack Alawite identity. Women and girls are not only targeted as civilians but also abused as symbols of their community. Their violation is employed to humiliate, destabilize, and undermine the Alawites psychologically, culturally, and socially.

This sexual violence constitutes a crime against humanity and highlights the cruelty with which the persecution of the Alawites is carried out. It is not only an attack on the individual victims but an attempt to dismantle the entire community.

Threats in the Diaspora

Even outside Syria, the Alawite diaspora is not safe from persecution and threats. In recent years, there has been an alarming increase in hostility, threats, and online hate crimes against Alawites, particularly on social media. These attacks aim to destabilize the diaspora psychologically, isolate them socially, and undermine their connection to their identity.

These activities range from hateful comments and targeted defamation campaigns to explicit death threats. Alawite communities in exile are often falsely labeled as "regime sympathizers" or supporters of the Assad regime, regardless of their actual political stance. This generalization serves as a justification for hostilities that endanger their physical security and socially marginalize them in their host countries.

The persecution has profound psychological impacts on the affected individuals, often leading to feelings of alienation from the societies in which they seek refuge. The persistent state of threat affects not only their personal lives but also their collective consciousness and their ability to openly embrace their identity.

The combination of online hate and political pressure shows that the persecution of the Alawites knows no geographical boundaries. Even in the diaspora, this community remains exposed to a hostile environment, amplified by digital networks.

It is crucial to take these threats seriously and implement effective protective measures. Governments and international organizations must work proactively to combat online hate crimes, ensure the safety of Alawite exile communities, and send clear messages against all forms of discrimination and persecution. The Alawite diaspora deserves to live with dignity and security in their host countries, free from the shadows of violence that forced them from their homeland.

Demands for International Intervention and Security for the Alawites

The ongoing persecution and targeted annihilation of the Alawite community in Syria require an immediate, resolute, and coordinated response from the international community. The measures taken so far have been insufficient to halt the systematic attacks on this endangered minority. Now is the time to act with clarity, courage, and humanity:

1. Immediate Intervention to Prevent Genocide

The United Nations and all relevant international organizations must urgently implement measures to ensure the survival of the Alawites. These measures should include:

- Peace missions to protect the Alawite population in their home regions.
- Security forces specifically tasked with targeting armed groups responsible for massacres, torture, and displacement.
- Establishment of safe zones where Alawites are protected from persecution and have access to essential resources.

The silence and hesitation of the global community must no longer enable the systematic eradication of this community.

2. Establishment of a Humanitarian Corridor

A humanitarian corridor must be established to provide Alawites with safe passage out of violence-affected areas. This corridor should:

- Facilitate family reunifications in exile, allowing affected individuals to find refuge with their relatives in safety.
- Provide medical care, food, and other essentials to ensure the survival of this vulnerable population.
- Serve as a conduit for international aid to alleviate suffering and uphold the basic rights of the Alawites.

The survival of the Alawites must no longer be jeopardized by political obstacles.

3. Zero Tolerance for Hate Speech and Discrimination

The persecution of the Alawite community transcends national borders. In the diaspora, Alawites face increasing threats from hate speech, online harassment, and discrimination. Governments and online platforms must:

- Vigorously prosecute hate crimes on social media.
- Mandate platforms to consistently remove hateful content.
- Enable legal action against individuals who issue threats against Alawites, whether online or offline.

No one should live in fear simply because they belong to a particular community.

4. Protection for Women and Children

Women and children of the Alawite community are especially vulnerable and are often targeted by the most brutal forms of violence, including sexual violence and enslavement. These atrocities represent not just a violation of individual rights but an attempt to dismantle the community itself. Specific measures must be implemented, including:

- Protection programs to evacuate women and children from high-risk areas.
- Psychological support and trauma care for survivors of violence.
- International mechanisms to combat the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and to prosecute perpetrators.

Protecting the most vulnerable is the foundation of any humanitarian intervention.

5. Accountability and Justice for the Victims

The unimaginable crimes committed against the Alawite community must not go unpunished. Comprehensive international prosecution is necessary to hold all those responsible, from planners to perpetrators, accountable. This requires:

- Special tribunals for war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Documentation of atrocities by human rights organizations and independent observers.
- Support for survivors and witnesses to provide safe testimony.

Justice for the victims is not only a moral imperative – it is the foundation for building peace and humanity.

Urgent Appeal: Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide Against the Alawites

The time for turning a blind eye is over. The world stands at a moral and historical crossroads: Will we act now, or will we accept that a community is being pushed to the brink of genocide and eradicated? The systematic persecution and massacres of the Alawites are not isolated tragedies; they are part of a large-scale extermination campaign. This threatens not only the lives of millions but also the fundamental values of humanity and justice.

Every second of hesitation costs lives. Every atrocity – whether a massacre, torture, or the destruction of religious sites – is a silent scream accusing our inaction. Alawites—men, women, and children – are being persecuted, tortured, raped, and killed while the world stands by. It is the duty of the international community, governments, organizations, and the media to break this silence and take decisive action for those whose voices have been silenced.

Silence is complicity. Action is hope. We, the Federation of Alawites in Europe, urgently appeal to the international community to fulfill its moral and legal responsibilities. It is not enough to condemn the violence – it must be stopped. The perpetrators of these crimes must not go unpunished. The Alawites must be given the chance to live in peace and dignity.

History will judge us not by our words but by our actions. Now is the moment to clearly name the injustice and actively oppose it – in respect for human dignity, in the pursuit of justice, and in the commitment to securing peace.

Let us act – before it is too late. Every moment of hesitation brings more suffering, more death, and more destruction. The Alawites deserve not just our sympathy but our resolute solidarity. Let us not leave them alone. **The time to act is now.**

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Note:

This report is based on a multitude of sources, including eyewitness accounts, statements from acquaintances, relatives, and friends on the ground, as well as information gathered from social media platforms. It is indisputable that this report highlights only a fraction of the documented atrocities, while the true scale of events is significantly broader, more complex, and even more critical. The primary aim of this report is to create fundamental awareness of the silent suffering endured by the Alawite population and to underscore the urgency of further investigations and actions.

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