

Massacre in Latakia: Syria's Alawites and Christians Face Systematic Extermination Under Al-Qaeda Rule

by Senator (ret.) Richard H. Black

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March 10—The slaughter of Alawites in Latakia province marks the culmination of a brutal proxy war launched under former United States President Barack Obama and finalized by President Joe Biden, leading to the collapse of Syria's secular government and the rise of a terrorist regime.

Once admired as the most democratic country in the Arab Middle East, Syria had a constitutionally elected president, Bashar al-Assad, and an advanced 2012 constitution that guaranteed freedom of religion, speech, and women's rights. Now, under the rule of an ex-al-Qaeda warlord, the country has descended into mass killings, terror, and revenge massacres targeting religious minorities.

A Proxy War that Led to Slaughter

The crisis traces back to 2011, when the Obama Administration orchestrated the overthrow of Libya's President Muammar Gaddafi to seize its massive arsenal of advanced weapons. These weapons were then transferred to Syrian militants via Türkiye, under the CIA's covert program "Timber Sycamore." The goal was to arm a jihadist army drawn from across the globe, igniting a war that resulted in over 500,000 deaths, characterized by mass beheadings, systematic rape,



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crucifixions, and other atrocities.

One of the key figures to emerge from this conflict was Abu Mohammad al-Jawlani, a former lieutenant of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Once a prisoner of the U.S. Army, he was mysteriously released just as the CIA was activating the Timber Sycamore project in Syria, and he became the leader of al-Nusra, (later renamed Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS) which was, in fact, al-Qaeda in Syria.

Just 10 years earlier, 19 men from al-Qaeda had hijacked passenger jets and crashed them into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in the infamous 9-11 attacks. They killed 3,000 Americans, many of whom leapt to their deaths to avoid the flames.

Nonetheless, al-Qaeda in Syria, under its various names, became the core of the covert CIA operation to topple the constitutionally-elected



U.S. Department of Defense

Mugshot of terrorist, now HTS leader, Abu Mohammed Al-Jawlani, after capture by U.S. forces in Iraq, 2006.

government of Bashar al-Assad. An anti-Syrian U.S.-led alliance steadfastly supported al-Jawlani's forces as they fought to overthrow the legitimate government of Syria. This, even though al-Jawlani himself was designated an especially dangerous terrorist with a \$10 million bounty on his head.

In its waning days, the Biden Administration initiated a covert operation in conjunction with Türkiye and other nations and made the final push to topple Assad. Exhausted by 14 years of Western blockades, de-banking, sanctions, and the U.S. military occupation and seizure of its food and fuel supplies in the north, Syria's forces succumbed, leading to al-Jawlani's rise to power.

He quickly shed his jihadist image, donned a suit and tie, and rebranded himself as "President Ahmed Hussein al-Sharaa," claiming to be a moderate leader. However, his past atrocities—including thousands of rapes and beheadings—remained undeniable. One of his first acts as Syria's new ruler was appointing Shadi al-Waisi as Justice Minister—a man caught on video personally ordering the execution of women for adultery.

Massacre of Syria's Religious Minorities

As al-Jawlani's [now al-Sharaa's] forces solidified control, they quietly launched "combing operations" to find and exterminate leaders of the Alawites, Christians, and other religious minorities. The Alawite defenders, led by elite veterans of the 4th Division's Tiger Forces, attempted to resist, but were badly outnumbered. The death toll quickly surpassed 1,000 and is rising rapidly, with defenseless women, children, and entire families slaughtered in cold blood.

Fearing mass execution, thousands of civilians fled for sanctuary at the Russian military base at Hmeimim, which admitted many. Eyewitnesses described scenes of horror. "Armed men were moving from house to house, attacking people as a form of entertainment.... They declared jihad on us from all over Syria," a resident of Latakia told Reuters.



VOA

Assad was ousted in December 2024 but hope for a return to stability has been shaken by deadly violence that began March 6 in Syria's coastal region, where security forces clashed with fighters loyal to the former president, leading to hundreds of deaths, including many civilians.

A survivor named Bashir recounted to CNN: "My 70-year-old uncle, a history professor, and his 60-year-old wife were killed in cold blood at home." In a video filmed at night, an armed militant with an Egyptian accent was heard taunting Alawite civilians: "To the Alawites, we're coming to slaughter you and your fathers."

CNN reported that other videos on Syrian social media showed brutal executions. One showed a militant pulling up to a house on a motorcycle, then forcing the resident to look at the camera, before executing him. Another shows a man forced to bark like a dog before being shot and killed.

Such merciless behavior was typical of the jihadis throughout their war against Syria. It serves as a reminder of why there was no choice for the Assad government but to employ force to protect the Syrian people.

Western Leaders React

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a statement March 9:

The United States condemns the radical Islamist terrorists, including foreign jihadis, that murdered people in Western Syria in recent days. The



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The UN says the conflict in Syria displaced some 12 million people in Syria, including more than 6 million refugees. Families collect water at a distribution point in Aleppo City, Nov. 2024.

United States stands with Syria's religious and ethnic minorities, including its Christian, Druze, Alawite, and Kurdish communities, and offers its condolences to the victims and their families.

On X (formerly Twitter), Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras blasted Western support for the Turkish-backed regime, saying:

What is happening in Syria is neo-Ottoman-inspired and is being implemented by the terrorists of Ahmed al-Sharaa, who did not change just because he wore a tie. Replacing an authoritarian leader with a leading member of al-Qaeda inevitably led to massacres of thousands of civilians and scenes of barbarism that humanity cannot bear.

Prime Minister Samaras urged the European Union to condemn the massacres and reinstate sanctions

against the al-Sharaa regime.

Despite his official denials, evidence suggests that HTS leader al-Jawlani [now al-Sharaa] ordered his fighters to stop filming the atrocities to avoid further international backlash. According to DD Geopolitics:

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) leader Abu Mohammad al-Jawlani has instructed militants to stop recording their acts of violence in a clear effort to control the narrative and minimize the damage to his public image.

A Brutal Regime the World Cannot Ignore

Although Western media has long portrayed Assad as a brutal dictator, the scale of violence under al-Jawlani's rule has exceeded even the worst predictions. The mass extermination of Alawites and Christians is unfolding as a stark reminder of what happens when radical jihadists are handed power under the guise of "democracy."

Western powers condemned President Assad for being overly harsh with the Islamic terrorists invading Syria, but these events demonstrate that no leader, however kind or enlightened, could possibly have suppressed such horrors without force. It is time we face that reality.

When the Biden Administration toppled President Assad, there was no one left to defend the Syrians. Now, the Alawite and Christian populations are dwindling under systematic extermination, and Syria is being redrawn under the domination of one of the world's most dangerous terrorists. The question now is: Will Syria emerge as the new Islamic Caliphate? Will the world act before it is too late?