



المركز السوري للإعلام وحرية التعبير

Navenda Sûriyayî ya Ragihandinê û Azadiya Derbirinê  
Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression

# Post Assad...Before Building the State

Violations in Syria's Coast and Hama - March 2025



.Photo of the mass grave in the village of Sanawbar, near the shrine of Sheikh Ali

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**The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)** is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit civil society organization founded in 2004. It works to achieve justice, defend human rights, promote media freedom, support civil society, and encourage active citizenship. The center has gained expertise in combating impunity and promoting the rule of law. The center has held special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2011. Its work focuses on documenting human rights violations and presenting legal cases to hold perpetrators accountable, strengthening the role of victims and their families, and supporting journalists, human rights defenders, and independent media to build democracy and support civil peace. The center has established a developed database to serve as a reference for transitional justice processes.

This report was produced by the Violations Documentation Project at the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression.

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# Acknowledgments

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Finally, we thank the Violations Documentation Team and the Communications Team at SCM for their tremendous efforts and for enduring risks to shed light on human rights violations in Syria and ensure that those responsible do not escape accountability



# Content

<b>I. Introduction and Methodology</b>	5
<b>II. Key Findings</b>	7
<b>III. Social and Political Context of the Events</b>	11
<b>IV. Military Context of the Events</b>	12
<b>V. Sequence of Events</b>	12
<b>VI. Documented Violations</b>	17
1. Extrajudicial Killings	17
2. Arrest, torture, and inhuman or degrading treatment	19
3. Destruction and Seizure of Civilian Property	20
4. Displacement of 21000 Syrians to Lebanon	22
<b>VII. Government Response</b>	22
The Problem of Trust in the Governmental Investigation Committee: Voices of Victims and Testimonies of Survivors	25
Crackdown on the Press	26
<b>VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations</b>	27
1. Recommendations for the Government Investigation Committee	28
2. Recommendations for the Syrian Transitional Government	28
<b>Annexes</b>	31
Annex I: Entities Suspected of Involvement in the Violations	31
Annex II: List of Victims' Names	32
Annex III: List of Digital Evidence	32
Annex IV: List of Individuals Suspected of Committing Crimes	32
Annex V: Interactive Map of Areas Where Violations Occurred	32

## I. Introduction and Methodology

This report comes in the context of efforts to document the grave human rights violations and crimes committed in areas in the Syrian coast and in Hama in March .2025 These included patterns of systematic violence ,such as extrajudicial killings ,widespread destruction ,and the looting of private property ,most of which were committed on a sectarian basis.

The report offers a preliminary analysis grounded in testimonies and information gathered and verified by the documentation team at the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression) SCM (in accordance with the international standards for documentation of human rights violations <sup>1</sup>.It aims to support accountability efforts and uncover the truth by supporting the work of the Governmental Investigation Committee on the Events on the Syrian Coast ,announced after the events ,and ensuring that all victims receive effective redress .The report is not intended to be a substitute for criminal investigations ,nor does it seek to determine the individual criminal responsibility of the perpetrators of the violations. It also does not claim to provide a comprehensive or definitive narrative .Instead ,it seeks to compile and analyze the available information ,serving as a starting point for further investigation and ensuring that these violations are not closed without accountability ,truth-finding ,and reparation.

This report draws on the documentation gathered by SCM's documentation team regarding the events that occurred in March ,2025 particularly between 6 and 9 March ,when the most significant number of violations and massacres took place in various areas of Latakia ,Tartous, and Hama governorates .The team conducted:

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1 The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) applies a rigorous methodology for documenting human rights violations grounded in international standards and best practices. This ensures that our documentation adheres to the fundamental principles of documentation, including impartiality, objectivity, accuracy, confidentiality, and do no harm. Key aspects of SCM's documentation methodology include:

- **Information Collection** :Our team of documentation officers and field reporters gathers information through firsthand testimonies and open-source investigations.
- **Information Verification** :Each reported violation is corroborated by at least two independent and authentic sources that our team has thoroughly verified.
- **Cross-Verification Process** :All collected information ,including testimonies ,undergoes a comprehensive cross-checking process to ensure accuracy and reliability.
- **Victim Identification** :Only victims whom we can identify by name are recorded in the SCM data management system and included in our statistical reports .Unidentified victims are not included in these reports ,but their information is securely stored until verification and completion are possible.
- **Standard of Proof** :SCM applies the "reasonable grounds to believe "standard ,which requires that there be a reliable and credible basis for concluding that a violation has occurred based on corroborated information.

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- 15 interviews (7 women and 8 men) with family members of victims and eyewitnesses, from Tartous Governorate, Baniyas City, and the villages of Sanobar, Bustan Al-Basha, and Ad-Dalia, in addition to members of the General Security, journalists, and four statements<sup>2</sup>. Testimonies were documented between March 12 and April 2025, 15
- The team communicated with more than 227 sources from communities affected by the violations, both online and in person, and received dozens of direct reports through its dedicated online mechanism for reporting human rights violations or via SCM's official social media accounts<sup>3</sup>.
- Analysis of 187 videos and several photographs gathered from open sources or shared directly with SCM, regarding killings and property destruction, in addition to 45 videos and 20 social media posts containing calls for general mobilization and incitement against the residents of the areas in which the violations took place. Each was technically verified using specialized digital tools and in accordance with international standards to assess its reliability.
- Review of official statements issued by the Transitional Government, as well as local and international reports issued on the events in the Syrian coast and Hama, and information available from open sources to strengthen the information base and cross-reference it with testimonies.

The documentation team adhered to international documentation standards, including accuracy, impartiality, integrity, objectivity, and the "do no harm" principle, throughout the process of gathering testimonies and verifying information. Names were withheld, and some testimonies were edited at the request and with the consent of the witnesses to remove any indicators that might reveal their identity, ensuring their safety and security while preserving the substance of the violations and related facts.

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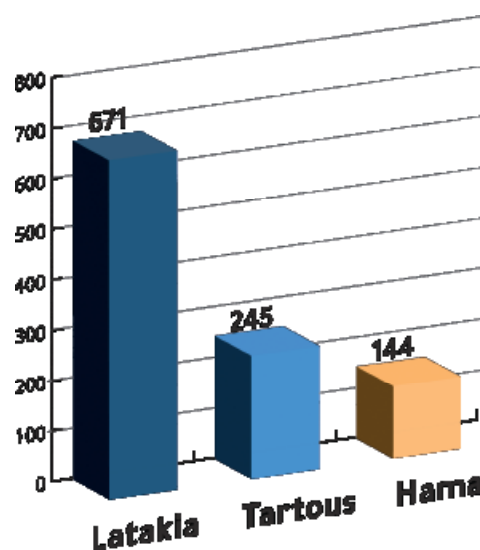
2 "Statement" (إفادة): Refers to direct information documented from a primary source (a survivor, eyewitness, or victim's relative) that has undergone cross-verification according to SCM's methodology, but the information source prefers not to have it documented as a formal testimony.

3 The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression's online reporting tool for violations is available at the following link: <https://scm.bz/public-communication-form/>

## II .Key Findings

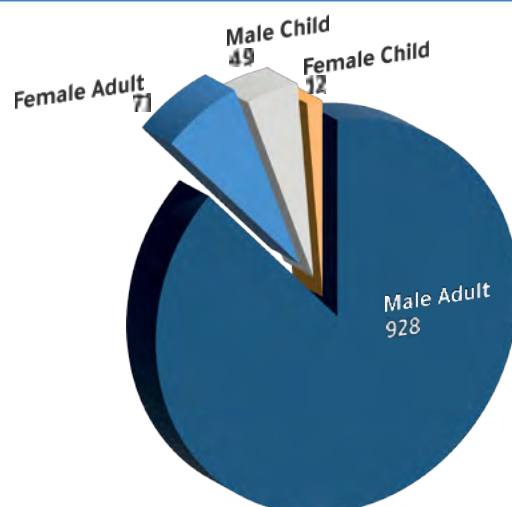
Through an analysis of testimonies ,cross-referenced with field evidence and open-source information ,the SCM documentation team was able to document:

- Large-scale extrajudicial killings, sectarian in nature, were committed in Latakia, Tartous, and Hama. As of the date of this report's issuance, SCM has documented **1060** civilian victims subjected to extrajudicial killings. Most of these occurred between 6 and 9 March 2025 (some violations may have occurred after this date, as it was difficult to ascertain the date of every violation accurately)<sup>4</sup>. This includes **245** in Tartous, **671** in Latakia, and **144** in Hama,

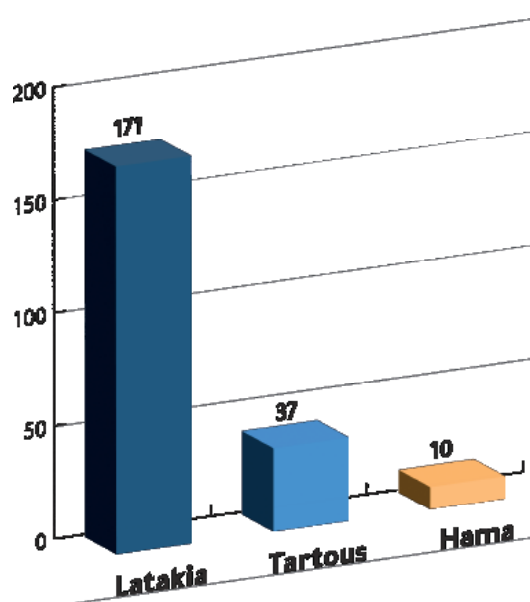


<sup>4</sup> Individuals associated with the former regime were involved in violations during the recent tragic events. These individuals are often referred to in the media and on social media platforms as “remnants” (Arabic: al-fuloul); a non-legal term that lacks a clear definition or objective criteria for identifying who it applies to. Some of those individuals were killed during the events and may have been documented as civilian victims. According to international human rights law – which the Center relies on in its documentation work – every individual, whether civilian or not, is protected from arbitrary deprivation of life. The central question in such cases is always whether the use of lethal force was necessary, proportionate, and lawful, which can only be determined through an independent criminal investigation, this should be made through the criminal investigation currently being carried out by the government’s investigative committee, and subsequently by the competent judicial authorities. Based on the information available to SCM, from both documented testimonies and open sources, including video footage, it was impossible to distinguish between civilians and those allegedly bearing arms against the state, making it difficult to assess the legality of the use of force in each case. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the execution of any person, regardless of their background, affiliation, or alleged actions, without a fair, impartial, and transparent trial constitutes a grave violation of both Syrian and international law, and cannot be justified under any circumstances. The right to a fair trial is a constitutional and internationally protected right, and denial of this right, whether the person is a civilian or not, is absolutely prohibited under both domestic and international law. Accordingly, SCM does not use the term “remnants/al-fuloul” in its reporting, as it is not a legal term, and its repeated use in media does not confer upon it any legal validity. Any reference to this term in the report reflects its use by media sources, officials, or witnesses, and does not represent the position of SCM.

among them **71** women and **61** children (**49** male and **12** female). Additionally,



the killing of **218** General Security personnel was documented, with **171** in Latakia, **37** in Tartous, and 10 in Hama<sup>5</sup>. All civilian and General Security victims have been identified by name<sup>6</sup>.



<sup>5</sup> The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression initially reported 1169 victims in its first statement regarding the events in the Coast and Hama. However, continuous documentation and verification revealed some duplicate names and individuals initially listed as killed who were later found alive. These revisions highlight the importance of ongoing verification for accurate and reliable information. Link to the statement: [Massacres Again: Statement on the Tragic Events of 610- March 2025 - the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression Center Statements](#).

<sup>6</sup> The number of victims is likely higher than the number stated in the report. The number stated is the number SCM was able to document according to its documentation methodology, which is based on documenting victims who can be identified by name only in SCM's data management system.



- At least 61 sites of killings and massacres were identified in various areas of Latakia, Tartous ,and Hama (see Annex V).<sup>7</sup>

- The events in the coastal region were accompanied by arrests ,torture ,and inhuman treatment ,including a consistent and repeated pattern of sectarian insults and physical assault against civilians.
- Women and children were subjected to psychological and physical intimidation that amounts to torture and inhuman treatment .This included death threats ,sectarian insults ,and the terrorizing of children by pointing weapons at their heads ,in addition to the degrading treatment of the elderly .Signs of psychological trauma remain evident among the survivors ,particularly among women who witnessed the loss of their relatives or were subjected to intimidation in front of their children.
- Armed formations affiliated with or loyal to the Transitional Government's Ministry of Defense ,alongside foreign fighters ,were involved in carrying out the violations.
- A wide range of weapons was used in the violations ,including automatic rifles ,light and medium machine guns ,and heavy machine guns mounted on pickup trucks .In addition, mortars ,rocket launchers ,and drones were also used .A helicopter operated by the Syrian army was observed during one of the attacks ,dropping explosive objects near the Naval Academy north of Jableh.
- Systematic looting and destruction of private property occurred ,including shops, homes ,cars ,and valuable possessions .This sometimes happened under the protection or complicity of armed groups affiliated with the government .Some operations were carried out by civilians from neighboring areas .These incidents were not reported due to fear of retaliation and the continued state of fear and distrust in government procedures among survivors and victims 'families in the Syrian coast.

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<sup>7</sup> Massacre is not a legal term in Syrian or international law. However, it's used descriptively in this report to refer to incidents involving widespread and deliberate extrajudicial killings of civilians, often characterized by their scale, gravity, or indiscriminate nature. Its use here aims to convey the severity of these events without implying a specific legal classification

- The pattern and scope of the violations indicate they were committed on sectarian grounds ,as several witnesses confirmed that victims were often asked about their sect before being killed.
- Governmental authorities failed or delayed in intervening to halt the killings and violations.
- Victims 'families expressed distrust in the work of the investigation committee formed by the government after the events.
- The absence of official media played a negative role ,as much misleading and fabricated news spread amidst the lack of official ,reliable ,and accessible news sources for all Syrians, which may have contributed to fueling division .The documentation team observed between 7 and 10 March:
  - The spread of fabricated news and old photos presented as new.
  - Hate speech through Facebook and Telegram pages ,including explicit calls for mass killings.
  - The use of some mosque pulpits to call for" mobilization against the Alawite sect".
  - Religious incitement campaigns by figures associated with some factions use religious texts to justify violence.
  - Weakness of Reconciliation Efforts :Despite the existence of media initiatives that sought to promote reconciliation between communities ,their voices were overshadowed by sectarian campaigns
- SCM also monitored calls for general mobilization and statements from tribes, religious leaders ,and civilian figures in various parts of Syria ,which included:
  - Mobilizing armed groups to participate in the" liberation "of the coast.
  - Slogans accusing others of apostasy and direct incitement against Alawites and Druze.
  - Popular demands to arm civilians to support the" General Security Forces".
  - Distribution of pamphlets in community campaigns containing explicitly hostile content.
- In contrast ,SCM documented testimonies from survivors who affirmed that their Sunni neighbors protected and smuggled them to prevent attacks by factions .Additionally, Alawite families hosted wounded General Security personnel and those injured during the clashes.

### III .Social and Political Context of the Events

The violations of March ,2025 which this report highlights ,represent a painful chapter of a long trajectory of social fragmentation ,sectarian division ,and systematic violence that began with the formation of the Syrian state .Under the Assad family's rule ,this violence became an institutionalized tool of control and governance ,and it worsened with the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in ,2011 leaving behind hundreds of thousands of victims ,especially during the years of war.

For over five decades ,the former Syrian regime entrenched a system of governance based on utilitarian and sectarian loyalty .It worked to militarize society and fragment national bonds through regional and sectarian discrimination ,which fostered a constant sense of mutual fear and threat among the components of Syrian society .The Syrian Coast regions, particularly the governorates of Latakia ,Tartous ,and rural Hama ,formed a central base in the power structure ,both through the heavy presence of their people within the security and military apparatuses and by promoting the area as a " stronghold of loyalty".

This reality was not a result of Syrians 'free choices ,including the people of the Coast ,but was imposed on them by force for decades .After the fall of the former regime at the end of 2024 and the country's entry into a transitional phase ,the political and security map in the Coast was rapidly reshaped through the re-introduction of figures historically linked to the former regime without meaningful involvement of local communities or the provision of guarantees for a just and safe transition.

This coincided with a widespread campaign of dismissals affecting tens of thousands of employees and workers in state institutions from the Coast <sup>8</sup>,particularly in the security, military ,education ,media ,local administration ,and services sectors ,under the pretext of "uprooting the effects of the former regime ".Although a number of these individuals were not proven to be involved in any violations ,the dismissal decisions were taken collectively, lacking transparency and legal guarantees .This deepened the feeling of collective targeting and punishment and exacerbated feelings of anxiety and fear ,especially amidst the security chaos in the country and the repeated violations against local residents in the Coast ,ranging from insults and humiliating treatment to arrests and extrajudicial revenge.

This vacuum ,along with the absence of transparent justice and accountability policies and the failure to dismantle the old power system ,including its internal networks and external influence extensions ,led to escalating tensions ,increased sectarian rhetoric ,and an explosion of retaliatory violence .Some residents of the Coast felt they were collectively targeted for being perceived as " Alawites "or" loyalists to the former regime ,"while armed actors ,some belonging to factions that participated in the armed conflict ,rushed to exploit the

8 Al-Souri Al-Youm, "Protest at the Latakia Justice Palace in Protest of Employee Dismissal Decision," January 10, 2025, available at: <https://syrian-today.net/ar/article/8871/-اعتصام-في-عدلية-اللاذقية-احتجاجا-على-قرار-فصل-موظفين> (last accessed July 2, 2025).

security vacuum for retaliatory purposes or to control land and resources .In contrast ,the Transitional Government was unable to control the behavior of local or supporting forces, resulting in grave violations of a political and sectarian nature.

This complex context ,shaped by the legacy of the former regime ,the weakness of transitional institutions ,and the absence of transitional justice ,paved the way for the violent explosion the country witnessed in March .2025 This must be taken into account when analyzing the facts ,determining responsibilities ,and formulating effective responses to prevent their recurrence.

#### IV .Military Context of the Events

While it is difficult to separate the military events of March 2025 from the broader context of Syria's recent history ,particularly since the revolution in March 2011 and the fall of the Assad family regime ,it is important to highlight some military developments that we believe are directly related to the events in the Coast and rural Hama .In the weeks leading up to the March events ,there was a noticeable escalation in security and military operations in these areas ,especially following ambushes and clashes involving groups affiliated with the former regime.

Government forces responded with violent sweep operations ,including arrests and raids in several villages .This was accompanied by official media silence and conflicting narratives between the authorities and the local community .A clear role for external actors was also noted during this period ,playing a part in the security escalation and counter-violence within a power struggle on the ground between regional powers investing in the former regime's structures or attempting to direct the transitional phase according to their interests<sup>9</sup>.

#### V .Sequence of Events

##### Day One: 6 March 2025

On 6 March 2025, unknown assailants opened fire on General Security personnel to prevent them from arresting wanted individuals from the village of Beit Ana in rural Latakia. This was followed by a series of organized attacks and ambushes against General Security, where armed groups, believed to be linked to the former regime - whose numbers we could not determine - attacked military and civilian sites and roads in the governorates of Latakia, Tartous, Homs, and Hama in a coordinated and simultaneous manner. Most of the subsequent attacks and clashes concentrated in Latakia and Tartous governorates.

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9 Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, "On Iran's Relationship with the Syrian Coast," March 11, 2025, available at: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/في-علاقة-إيران-بأحداث-الساحل-السوري> On Iran's Relationship with the Events in the Syrian Coast (last accessed July 2, 2025).

The attacks were launched from three axes: the eastern mountains of Latakia, rural Jableh, and the vicinity of Tartous. The groups targeted police stations, checkpoints, and cut the Latakia-Jableh-Baniyas main road, concurrently with attacks on the Naval Forces Command, the Naval College near Jableh, the Criminal Security branches in Latakia and Jableh, Al-Qardaha Regional Command, and Jableh National Hospital, taking full control of them. They also cut the Duraikesh Road, Al-Qastal-Latakia Road, the Beit Yashout Road, and Satamu Military Airport, in addition to seizing control of Tartous port checkpoints. At the onset of the attacks, these groups killed approximately 75 individuals, including members of the General Security, police officers, and civilians. Around 200 personnel were taken captive, and dozens were injured.<sup>10</sup>

The report also documented the government forces' use of a helicopter that fired a missile while flying over Ad-Dalia city. Additionally, a military helicopter was used by the Syrian Army to drop explosive objects on sites believed to belong to former regime elements in rural Latakia.

Clashes also began on the Al-Qardaha bridge adjacent to one of the entrances to the Qabou Al-Awamiya village between General Security personnel and factions affiliated with the authorities on one side and armed groups linked to the former regime on the other. According to testimonies received by SCM, an assault on the village began after the clashes on the bridge ended and continued until the evening of 7 March by armed individuals wearing military uniforms identical to those of the Ministry of Defense factions, accompanied by people in civilian clothes, who committed killings against civilians.

By 4:00 PM on 6 March, military confrontations had reached Jableh city. Within hours, military groups linked to the former regime managed to seize control of the city's northern and eastern neighborhoods. With the storming of the city's southern neighborhoods, these groups carried out sectarian killings against the Sunni component. When military convoys from the General Security and Ministry of Defense, accompanied by military factions and local militias, entered to regain control, some of these forces committed widespread violations, including killings and looting, targeting all communities, both Sunnis and Alawites. (Among the Sunni neighborhoods that were looted was Furwah Street in the Jbeibat district of Jableh.)

Media outlets published a statement attributed to Ghiath Dalla, a former officer in the Fourth Division previously led by Maher al-Assad, in which he announced the establishment of what is called the "Military Council for the Liberation of Syria." The statement includes former leaders from the Assad regime and claims its goal is to "liberate Syria" and overthrow the current government.<sup>11</sup> A video also surfaced featuring a man named Miqdad Fatiha, a

10 Al Jazeera Net, "This Is How Syrian Forces Repelled the Coastal Attack," March 10, 2025, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2025/هكذا-تصدت-الحكومة-المؤقتة-لهجوم-10/3/> (last accessed July 2, 2025).

11 Al Jazeera Channel, "Former Officer in the Fourth Division Announces the Establishment of the 'Military Council for the Liberation of Syria'," available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=504219299145205>.

former fighter in the Republican Guard during the previous regime and current leader of the so-called “Coastal Shield Brigade,” in which he declares his rebellion against the Syrian government.<sup>12</sup> The Coastal Shield Brigade led the attacks, aiming to seize strategic military positions. Testimonies received by the Center confirmed that the attacks were coordinated and targeted several military and security sites simultaneously, including in Mukhtariyah and al-Haffeh in rural Latakia, as well as Baniyas, the Da'tour neighborhood in Latakia city, and extending into the countryside of Qardaha, Jableh, and Tartous.<sup>13</sup>

The attackers then fortified themselves in rugged areas in the Latakia mountains, which they adopted as a center for their operations. They also entrenched themselves in residential buildings, especially in Jableh city, which witnessed street warfare. A battle also erupted in the center of Latakia city, where the armed individuals attempted to reach the National Hospital. Calls for mass mobilization escalated, and demonstrations erupted in the governorates of Idlib, Homs, Hama, and Damascus, where protestors called for taking up arms and avenging the victims of the General Security forces.<sup>14</sup> On March 6, the Director of General Security in Latakia announced a full mobilization of the governorate's forces, while the Ministry of Defense indicated that military reinforcements had been dispatched to the area.

The operations carried out by military groups affiliated with the former regime against the General Security also included the siege of the General Security center in Jneinet Raslan, in the Dreikish area of rural Tartous, by armed groups linked to the regime. According to the testimonies of two General Security personnel provided to SCM, the facility was attacked on the evening of March 6, 2025. The assault began with a small armed group, believed to be part of what the witnesses described as “remnants of the former regime - Al-fuloul,” before expanding to include more than 200 fighters; some wearing the former regime's military uniforms and others in civilian clothing. The attackers surrounded and besieged the center from all directions.

They used light and medium weapons, including 5.5-caliber anti-armor launchers, RPGs, Kalashnikov rifles, M4 rifles, and other arms. The center's personnel attempted to resist the assault, but negotiations were later initiated through local intermediaries, including the village mukhtar, the mayor, and a judge from the Dreikish area. As a result of these

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12 Al Jazeera Net, “Miqdad Fatiha: The Butcher of the Syrian Coast and Commander of the ‘Coastal Shield’ Militia,” May 31, 2025, available at: [Miqdad Fattouha: The Butcher of the Syrian Coast and Commander of the ‘Coastal Shield’ Militia](#) (last accessed July 2, 2025).

13 It is worth noting that on April 9, 2025, the channel Al-Mashhad aired an interview with Syrian businessman Mohammad Jaber, who resides in Russia and was formerly the commander of the so-called “Desert Hawks” militia. In the interview, Jaber stated that military groups fought under his supervision during the attacks carried out against the Syrian government in the coastal region. Official YouTube channel of journalist Tony Khalife, April 10, 2025, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NyuxirAC44> (last accessed July 3, 2025).

14 BBC News Arabic, “Latakia: How Did the Spark of Chaos Begin in the Syrian Coast?” March 7, 2025 (last updated March 11, 2025), available at: <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/c234780n0yyo> (last accessed June 29, 2025).

talks, a promise of safe passage was offered in exchange for surrendering their weapons and departing in their vehicles toward the city of Tartous. However, after handing over their weapons, the forces were captured, 46 personnel in total (35 from General Security and 11 police officers from the Dreikish station), and taken to an isolated chicken farm in the mountains, except for Hamzeh al-Jomaa ("Abu al-Hareth Qastoun") and Mohammad al-Sawwaf ("Abu Faisal Muhambel"), who were separated from the group and taken elsewhere. Later, Mohammad al-Sawwaf's body was found killed.<sup>15</sup>

According to the two witnesses, during their captivity, they were subjected to mistreatment, including insults, beatings, and verbal and physical abuse. They were forced to chant slogans such as: "With our soul and blood, we sacrifice for you, Bashar," and "God, Syria, Bashar and no one else," while their captors told them, "Bashar is your god." All their belongings were confiscated—arms, money, phones, personal documents, even the center's furniture and equipment. They were later transferred to Tartous following further negotiations, but none of their belongings were returned to them.

### **Day Two: 7 March 2025**

The government dispatched military convoys to the region in a large-scale security operation involving the Ministries of Defense and Interior, supported by loyalist groups. In parallel with the military operation, demonstrations erupted in the cities of Idlib, Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, and Daraa in support of the security operation carried out by security forces and elements of the Syrian Ministry of Defense in the Syrian Coast. Conversely, protesters from the Alawite community took to the streets in several cities in support of the anti-government military movements and rejection of Ahmad al-Sharaa's leadership in Syria.<sup>16</sup> On the same day, 7 March, President Al-Sharaa declared that the time for forgiveness was over, referring to the "liberation and purification" of the region, while calling on security forces to protect civilians.<sup>17</sup>

The Transitional Administration in Syria used Shahin drones to pursue armed individuals in rural Latakia. The villages of Harf As-Sari, Baabda, Duweir Baabda, Ad-Dalia, Wadi Al-Qalaa, and Beit Ana were subjected to artillery and rocket shelling from the Naval College, which houses the military operations command. At the same time, helicopters targeted sites in Beit Ana with intensive aircraft overflights.

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15 The body of the commander known as "Abu al-Hareth" was found on June 9 in the Nabi Matta summit area, several months after his disappearance. It is believed that he was executed by groups affiliated with the former Syrian regime after being abducted in March.

Al Jazeera Net", Security Source Reveals to Al Jazeera Net the Circumstances of the Killing of a Military Commander in Rural Tartous " (June) 2025 ,9 last updated June , (2025 ,10 available at :<https://www.aljazeera.net/news-مصدر-أمني/9/6/2025/>) 3 , (2025 ,3 last accessed July .)

16 Ibid., BBC News Arabic, footnote 15.

17 President Ahmed Al-Sharaa's Statement (6 March 2025, via Telegram): "The time for amnesty and forgiveness is over, and the phase of liberation and purification has begun, available [https://t.me/Syrian\\_Arab\\_R3public/264](https://t.me/Syrian_Arab_R3public/264) (accessed 15 June 2025)

The authorities reimposed a curfew in Tartous and Latakia cities after it had been lifted on the morning of the same day. The curfew continued until 10:00 AM local time on Saturday, March 8, except for residents who were allowed to leave for Friday prayers.

The security and military operation concluded on the night of March 7, and government-affiliated forces regained control of the majority of checkpoints along the Syrian Coast. Government forces launched a widespread sweep operation, announcing that the movements were part of a comprehensive military plan to fully secure the coast, eliminate the so-called "remnants," and disarm in an attempt to establish full control over the area and re-establish security according to military directives.

A security source in the Ministry of Interior told the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) that individual violations were committed by members of unorganized popular crowds who headed to the coast in response to the general mobilization to support the security forces and the Ministry of Defense.<sup>18</sup>

On March 7, the village of Arzeh in rural Hama was subjected to a brutal attack carried out by armed groups, following public incitement against its residents by a cleric from the nearby village of Khattab, known as Abu Jayir al-Khattabi, who had openly called for the displacement of the village's inhabitants.

Despite reassurances given to residents the night before by Syrian authorities and local elders from neighboring villages that no attack would occur, armed men stormed the village after Friday prayers. They gathered the men in the main square at gunpoint while chanting sectarian slogans hostile to Alawites, and opened fire on them in a massacre that lasted approximately three hours.

It is believed that the perpetrators came from surrounding Sunni villages and killed around 25 people.<sup>19</sup> One woman was also killed in her home after refusing to leave when residents were ordered to evacuate.<sup>20</sup>

The team verified a video clip posted on March 7, which was confirmed to have been filmed in Arzeh. The footage shows several bodies lying on the ground with visible blood stains.

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18 ANA News Agency Official Facebook Page (7 March 2025): Security source statement on "remnants of the defunct regime, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/SanaNewsAjel/posts/مصدر-أمني-في-وزارة-الداخلية-ل-سنا-بعد-قيام-فلول-النظام-البائد-باغتيال-العديد-م-1096716235821923/> (Accessed 15 June 2025)

19 The Guardian, 'They killed him in cold blood': the cycle of revenge in north-west Syria, 15 March 2025, available at: [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/15/revenge-attacks-alawite-arza-latakia-syria?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/15/revenge-attacks-alawite-arza-latakia-syria?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (accessed on 3 July 2025)

20 Snack Syrian, "Demographic Change in Western Arzeh Following a Massacre That Claimed the Lives of 21 Executed Individuals," April 24, 2025, available at: [https://snacksyrian.com/تغيير-ديموغرافي-في-أرزة-21-أفراد-أُعدموا-في-الغربية-بعد-م-مج-2025-04-24/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://snacksyrian.com/تغيير-ديموغرافي-في-أرزة-21-أفراد-أُعدموا-في-الغربية-بعد-م-مج-2025-04-24/?utm_source=chatgpt.com) accessed July 3, 2025).



### Day Three: 8 March 2025

On 8 March, news began to circulate about field executions and bloody acts of revenge that claimed hundreds of lives within a few days. Individuals from the Alawite sect were targeted and killed based on their identity in an act of retaliation carried out by factions of unknown names and affiliations. These operations assumed a retaliatory and indiscriminate character without clear or officially announced orders from the authorities in Damascus or the Ministry of Defense.

On the same day, an official in the Ministry of Defense announced in a recorded video that civilians who "rushed to support their brothers" must return to their areas,<sup>21</sup> emphasizing that the situation was completely under control and operations were proceeding as planned. Subsequently, SCM had monitored a statement by a source in the Ministry of Interior acknowledging the commission of "individual violations" by organized elements. However, upon re-searching, the statement was not found, as it was likely deleted later. Human Rights Watch referenced the same statement in a press release published on March 10, 2025.<sup>22</sup>

During the withdrawal of several armed groups from the coastal region, multiple massacres were committed on March 9.

## VI .Documented Violations

### 1. Extrajudicial Killings<sup>23</sup>

Testimonies documented by SCM indicate that multiple armed factions committed widespread extrajudicial mass killings against civilians in the Syrian Coast during March ,2025 particularly in Latakia and Tartous governorates ,in addition to Hama governorate .This occurred in the absence of any intervention or clear measures by the government to halt the violations and protect civilians in these areas .The patterns of violations varied to include field executions, mass killings ,burning ,and mutilation of bodies ,with sectarian questions used as a basis for killing.

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21 Ministry of Defense Official Telegram Channel (8 March 2025): Statement on combat operations, available at: [https://t.me/Sy\\_Defense/226](https://t.me/Sy_Defense/226) (accessed 15 June 2025)

22 Human Rights Watch (10 March 2025): Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/10/03/syria-end-coastal-killing-spree-protect-civilians> (accessed 28 June 2025)

23 In this report, the term "extrajudicial or extrajudicial killing" refers to any death attributable to the State, whether through its direct actions or through its failure to fulfill its obligations under international human rights law, in particular its duty to respect and protect the right to life.

This includes ,for example:

- Deaths resulting from the acts or omissions of State organs or agents.
- Killings carried out by law enforcement forces or military and militia groups suspected of acting under the direction ,consent ,or acquiescence of the State.

The term also includes instances where the State fails to prevent foreseeable threats to life from non-State actors through negligence ,as well as instances where the State fails to investigate suspicious deaths ,even if the death was not directly caused by the State itself.

In Qarfis town of rural Latakia ,a group affiliated with the Sultan Suleiman Shah faction ,Al-Amashat ,according to testimonies ,committed a horrific massacre while passing through to relieve the siege on General Security forces in Ad-Dalia village .Dozens of bodies were found inside the shrine of Sheikh Ahmed Qarfis.

In Al-Aziziya village of Sahl Al-Ghab ,rural Hama ,witnesses reported the entry of masked gunmen from neighboring villages) Al-Tamanah ,Al-Huweiz ,Qabr Faddah ,(who committed looting and assaults on residents ,accompanied by field executions of civilians from the village .Complaints submitted to General Security did not yield any results ,according to witnesses.

In Sanobar village ,Jableh ,a survivor ,spoke of her home being stormed by elements of Jaysh al-Islam ,who asked the family about their sect and kidnapped her son ,who was later found killed and his body completely burned .According to the witness ,the faction's elements explicitly indicated their intention to" bring Alawites into Islam ",confirming the sectarian background of the crime.

In Bustan Al-Basha ,rural Jableh ,a witness recounted how an armed group stormed his father's house ,asked him about his sect ,and then field-executed him in front of the house after he replied that he was" Alawite ".He stated that some of the elements were not Syrian and spoke foreign languages ,indicating the possible presence of foreign fighters within the factions.

In an exclusive video reviewed by the Civil Peace Group in Homs ,several civilians appear to have been executed in the Qardaha countryside .Among the bodies ,one individual can be seen sitting in a wheelchair ,indicating that some of the mass killings targeted persons with disabilities .These individuals posed no threat and had no means of escape .A witness from the Qusour neighborhood in Banias reported that his father ,brothers ,and aunt were killed by armed men suspected to be of non-Syrian nationality .He added that several Sunni residents of Banias ,longtime friends of the family ,rushed to rescue him ,his mother ,his wife ,and his brother's wife .They sheltered them in their home for several days and later assisted them in leaving the city .He confirmed that had it not been for these individuals ,the surviving members of his family would not have made it out alive.

Testimonies collected by SCM also suggest the involvement of multiple factions in the violations .One witness from the Qusour neighborhood in Banias reported seeing vehicles, such as Santafe and pickup trucks ,equipped with Dushka machine guns and bearing markings identifying factions ,including the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade) al-Amshat ,(the Hamza Division) al-Hamzat ,(and the Eastern faction) al-Sharqiya.(

According to a female witness from the village of Sanoubar ,one fighter approached her and asked" ,Do you know who we are "?She replied" ,The National Army "?to which he responded,

“No ,we are the Mujahideen of Jaysh al-Islam .We came here so that you could convert to Islam”.

Other testimonies indicated that violations were also committed by battalions believed to be affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham .One witness from Sanoubar specifically identified Battalion ,400 which was previously part of HTS and is now reportedly affiliated with the Ministry of Defense in the Syrian Interim Government .The witness stated that this battalion had already been present in the villages of Sanoubar and Qarfaiss before the events.

In another testimony ,a witness reported that those responsible for the raids ,looting ,and killings in the village of Aziziyah were armed men who came from neighboring Sunni-majority villages in the al-Ghab plain .He noted that the identities of these attackers were known to the residents due to geographic proximity .Still ,he could not confirm whether they belonged to General Security or any faction affiliated with the Ministry of Defense of the Interim Government .On the contrary ,he stated that General Security personnel treated civilians respectfully and were not implicated in any violations.

Some witnesses also reported the presence of foreign fighters among the armed groups operating in the Qusour and Murooj neighborhoods of Banias ,as well as in the villages of Sanoubar and Bustan al-Basha in Latakia .In total ,the documentation team at SCM documented 1060 civilian victims subjected to extrajudicial killings ,the majority of whom were killed during military operations between 6 and 9 March .2025 This includes 245 in Tartous 671 ,in Latakia ,and 144 in Hama .Among the victims were 71 women and 61 children 49) boys and 12 girls .(In addition ,the deaths of 218 General Security personnel were documented 171 :in Latakia 37 ,in Tartous ,and 10 in Hama .All civilian and General Security victims have been identified by name.

## **2. Arrest ,torture ,and inhuman or degrading treatment**

According to information gathered by SCM ,military operations and the search of residential neighborhoods were accompanied by humiliation of civilians ,ranging from verbal abuse to physical assault .These practices did not spare women ,particularly mothers ,who were subjected to forms of psychological intimidation ,nor did they spare children or older people.

Arrests were accompanied by acts of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment of detainees ,including piling them into transport vehicles ,verbally assaulting them with slurs such as” shabiha” “pro-regime thugs” ,(dogs” “scum “,and other sectarian insults ,as well as threats of execution ,beatings with rifle butts ,and forcing them to crawl and howl while being transferred from the vehicles to General Security centers .In some videos ,there were repeated calls to stop recording ,seemingly aimed at concealing the violations and protecting those responsible .However ,SCM was unable to verify the identity of the parties responsible

for the arrests ,nor determine the number of detainees or the reasons for their detention.

In the Al-Muruj neighborhood of Baniyas ,one female witness reported that the attackers gathered young men from the neighborhood in the main street and subjected them to beatings and insults .The young men were forced to mimic the sounds of howling and braying and to insult their own religious symbols .The psychological torture reportedly continued late into the night .The witness confirmed that many residents ,including older men and civilian employees ,were beaten and humiliated .One mother was forced to kiss the feet of the leader of the armed group in exchange for her son's release.

In the village of Bustan al-Basha ,a woman reported that the armed men took the women and children to a house far from the site where the executions of men and young boys were taking place .There ,they were subjected to verbal abuse .The woman said that one of the attackers pointed a gun at her two sons ,aged five and six ,and asked her " :Which one should we kill first " ?This caused immense terror for her and the children .She added that the gunmen pointed weapons at the children's heads as a means of intimidation and that the women pleaded for their lives .In the end ,none of the women or children were physically harmed.

The locations of several video recordings were verified with the help of the Civil Peace Group in Homs ,which documented torture in areas such as Mukhtariyah ,Al-Sheer ,and Sanoubar. However ,the locations of several other videos remain inconclusive .Nevertheless ,it was confirmed that some of these videos were published after March ,6 which strongly suggests they are related to the events and violations that took place in the coastal areas during that period.

Finally ,SCM documented abuses committed against the bodies of victims ,including dragging corpses ,throwing them into ditches ,setting them on fire ,or leaving them on roadsides to rot .Some were even stomped on while sectarian and dehumanizing slurs were used to describe them .A witness from Bustan al-Basha reported that as they were fleeing toward the orchards ,they saw bodies lying in the road ,horrifying scenes that continue to traumatize the children to this day .She added that when they tried to bury the dead ,they initially faced delays .Eventually ,the bodies were buried in what she described as a " cruel and painful manner " in a mass grave under the supervision of unidentified armed men .Photography was prohibited ,and some of the bodies were mutilated ,including cases of eyes being gouged out.

### **3. Destruction and Seizure of Civilian Property**

According to testimonies collected by SCM ,a series of violations targeting private property and economic interests were documented in several Syrian regions during the events of 6 and 9 March .2025 Dozens of shops ,homes ,and commercial facilities were subjected to

looting and deliberate destruction ,most of which belonged to individuals from the Alawite community ,suggesting a possible sectarian dimension to the violations.

In the Al-Qusour neighborhood of Baniyas City ,a witness reported that prominent economic establishments in the neighborhood were subjected to organized looting and destruction. They explained that armed groups ,and in some cases with the participation of General Security elements ,smashed shop locks ,followed by the arrival of civilians and small trucks (Suzuki and Kia (that loaded goods and contents <sup>24</sup>.The witness also reported that all shops containing valuable goods ,such as car and motorcycle showrooms ,were looted and destroyed.

In Bustan Al-Basha village ,rural Jableh ,a female witness reported that factions believed to be affiliated with the Ministry of Defense in the Transitional Government raided her family's home and stole mobile phones ,gold jewelry ,and sums of money .Days later ,the same group returned and stole solar panels ,gas cylinders ,a Kia 4000 car ,and a motorcycle belonging to the family.

In Salhab town ,rural Hama ,a witness reported that the town experienced intensive raids on March ,7 which included searching all homes and widespread theft .He mentioned that a large number of cars and motorcycles were looted from residents ,in addition to sums of money and gold jewelry stolen from homes ,with the contents of some houses being destroyed.

In the workers 'housing of the Baniyas refinery ,a witness stated that groups affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham ,including individuals of non-Syrian nationalities ,raided the workers' housing .They then categorized residents by sect ,Alawite and Sunni ,and proceeded to carry out widespread theft ,including household appliances ,gold jewelry ,money ,and a large number of cars .She also indicated that shops belonging to the Alawite community in the city market were burned entirely.

According to one testimony regarding the violations that took place in the predominantly Alawite village of Al-Aziziyah in the Al-Ghab Plain ,the raids ,looting ,and killings were carried out by armed men from neighboring Sunni-majority villages .The witness noted that these individuals were known to the residents of Al-Aziziyah due to the geographical proximity .He also confirmed that members of the General Security were not responsible for the violations, emphasizing that they treated the village's residents respectfully.

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24 Among the targeted shops, according to the witness, were: Mohannad Supermarket, Al-Tawfeer Supermarket, Hamouda Supermarket, Al-Hassan Supermarket, Al-Batoul Supermarket, Al-Tahunah Kunafa, Shayka shoeShoes store, "Oud Mashriqi" Perfumes, in addition to the destruction and burning of Al-Brazili accessories store after looting it, and the looting and destruction of "Palace" cosmetics store.

## 4. Displacement of 21000 Syrians to Lebanon

The violations in the Syrian Coast led to the forced displacement of dozens of families towards the Russian Hmeimim airbase near Latakia <sup>25</sup>. The violations also resulted in mass displacement towards Lebanon, where Akkar Governorate registered the displacement of 4,306 families, according to the Disaster Management Room, while the number of displaced persons reached approximately 21000 individuals by 6 April, 2025 distributed among 27 towns and villages in Al-Duraib and Al-Sahil areas, especially in Al-Masoudiya town and Akkar plain<sup>26</sup>. Accurate information on the number of returnees to their original areas after the cessation of violations or government measures taken to facilitate their return is not yet available, indicating the continued state of displacement and instability in the region.

### VII .Government Response

- On 9 March, 2025 President Ahmed Al-Sharaa issued a decision to form an independent national committee to investigate the events and violations that occurred in the coastal areas on 6 March <sup>27</sup>. 2025 The committee consisted of five judges, one military officer, and one lawyer. It was tasked with uncovering the circumstances and causes that led to these events, and identifying those responsible for violations against civilians and security forces personnel, with its report due within 30 days. The committee's temporary center is located in Latakia city, where four rooms have been allocated to host residents who wish to give their testimonies. This arrangement also allows those who prefer to give their testimony by phone instead of visiting the committee's center. According to the committee's official spokesperson, it adheres to local and international legal standards in its work, including incorporating those who request the application of witness protection measures.
- In a statement by a spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense on March, 8 he announced the continuation of combat operations and tightening the noose on what he called "officers and remnants of the defunct regime", and that control had been regained over areas that witnessed attacks on General Security personnel <sup>28</sup>. In the same statement, he said "We call upon the esteemed brothers who rushed to support their brothers to return to their areas, as the situation

25 Military Operations Directorate Official Telegram Page (7 March 2025): Statement on military operations, available at: [https://t.me/rd3\\_al3dwan/6667](https://t.me/rd3_al3dwan/6667). (accessed 17 June 2025)

26 Annahar (6 April 2025): "Over a Thousand New Syrian Displaced Cross the Great River in Northern Lebanon. Available at: <https://www.annahar.com/Lebanon/207138/اكثر-من-الف-نازح-سوري-جديد>. (accessed 17 June 2025).

27 President Ahmed Al-Sharaa's Decision (X/Twitter) (6 March 2025): Formation of a national investigation and fact-finding committee, available at: <https://x.com/SyPresidency/status/1898743992025595960>

28 Military Operations Directorate Official Telegram Page (8 March 2025): Statement by Syrian Ministry of Defense spokesperson, available at: [https://t.me/aleamaliaat\\_aleaskaria/455](https://t.me/aleamaliaat_aleaskaria/455), (accessed 28 June 2025)

- is under complete control and operations are continuing precisely according to plan, and there is no need for concern ".It is not entirely clear what is meant by" esteemed brothers "in the statement .It may refer to the armed factions that entered the coast as a result of calls for general mobilization .Additionally ,the statement mentioned that they are handing over all involved parties to the competent security authorities to ensure their accountability according to the law ,without providing any information about the measures taken against them after their referral.
- On 10 March ,Colonel Hassan Abdul Ghani ,the spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense, announced the end of military operations in the Latakia and Tartous regions .However, random sweep operations in Latakia villages continued ,with some factions failing to adhere to the authorities 'orders<sup>29</sup>.
- On Monday ,March ,10 the military police affiliated with the Ministry of Defense arrested two individuals after a video circulated showing them executing an unarmed civilian inside a home in the village of Sanoubar ,Jableh .On Tuesday ,March ,2025 ,11 the government announced the arrest of four individuals involved in the violations and their referral to the military court to face the charges brought against them .The official news agency SANA published photos of the detainees alongside security personnel ,stating that these individuals had participated in" bloody violations "and included a still image from the video used as evidence against them.
- However ,to date ,no results of the investigations have been announced ,nor has there been any clarification of the legal accountability mechanisms that will be followed against those arrested .No official information has been published regarding their names or their military or security affiliations .Official bodies merely referred to them through group photos without personal details or additional clarifications about their military backgrounds or affiliations .In this context ,it must be noted that some names of individuals who appeared in video clips related to the violations in the Coast have circulated on social media amidst the continued absence of any information from the government regarding the accountability of those involved<sup>30</sup>.
- On 10 April ,Syrian Transitional President Ahmed Al-Sharaa issued a presidential decree extending the work of the National Committee for Investigation and Fact-Finding on the events in the Syrian Coast for another three months ,non-renewable<sup>31</sup>.

29 Statement by Syrian Ministry of Defense Spokesperson, Colonel Hassan Abdul Ghani, published on the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) Facebook page on 10 March 2025, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/sana.gov/posts/pfbid026QFUYbiUgGdFpX2VrGcPNH466i95PakUSGQ2YroHLMMyvoh5pNUiNRuMcup99Zmuil> (accessed 17 June 2025).

30 A Facebook page named The Redlines published photos and names of 10 individuals it claims appeared in video clips related to the violations and may be involved. The post was published on 21 June 2025, and is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Brvs4SGk3/?mibextid=wwXlfr> (accessed 29 June 2025)

31 Presidential Decree No. 11 of 2025 by President Ahmed Al-Sharaa, extending the work of the National Committee for Investigation and Fact-Finding, is available at: <https://www.sana.sy/?p=2206570>



- Regarding relief for the affected areas ,there is a noticeable absence of any government plan for emergency relief or long-term recovery .Despite limited civil society initiatives, these areas continue to suffer from extremely poor economic conditions ,as many families have lost their source of income due to job losses ,the loss of breadwinners, or the inability to resume agricultural activities following the destruction or theft of agricultural equipment .The same applies to commercial activity after the looting and destruction of shops ,as not all owners are able to restart and restock their stores with commercial goods .There is also a lack of mobility for work for a considerable number of residents who are subject to reconciliation and do not possess civil IDs that allow them to move freely or seek job opportunities .According to testimonies received by SCM ,some factory owners and economic entities refuse to employ former military personnel from the Assad regime forces for fear of retaliation against them.
- Women ,especially widows who lost their husbands during these events ,as well as mothers of former soldiers ,continue to face heightened vulnerability due to the loss of their primary breadwinner ,lack of employment opportunities ,and the erosion of social protection networks .Some women expressed a persistent sense of fear of being targeted or socially stigmatized due to presumed associations of their relatives ,further worsening their psychological and living conditions.
- To date ,there is a lack of psychological support and trauma recovery programs specifically tailored for women and children .The healthcare sector in the region continues to suffer from the impact of the attacks carried out by groups affiliated with the former regime, which caused significant damage to hospitals ,particularly Al-Noor Specialized Private Hospital and the National Hospital in Jableh <sup>1</sup>.At the same time ,military hospitals ceased providing medical services to former soldiers and members of Assad's forces .These hospitals had previously offered healthcare to military personnel and their families ,but following the fall of the regime ,those services were discontinued .No alternatives or sufficient bed capacity currently exist in civilian hospitals to compensate for the gap.

1 Syria TV, "Details of What Happened in Jableh After the Attack by Remnants of the Regime: Widespread Looting and Property Burnings," March 22, 2025, available at: <https://www.syria.tv/-/تفاصيل-ما-حدث-في-جبله-بعد-هجوم-فلول-النظام-سراقات-واسعة-وإحراق-للممتلكات> (accessed July 2, 2025).



## **The Problem of Trust in the Governmental Investigation Committee :Voices of Victims and Testimonies of Survivors**

Testimonies documented by SCM reveal a lack of trust in the investigation committee formed after the widespread massacres and violations in the Syrian Coast .Several witnesses and survivors expressed their belief that the committee is not independent ,does not operate transparently ,and aims to conceal the truth rather than reveal it .Some absolutely refused to cooperate with the committee ,arguing that engaging with it would lend' legitimacy 'to the authority that formed it and would constitute normalization with the party accused of committing the killings .Others refused to cooperate due to a lack of security and fear for their lives as a result of the absence of witness protection guarantees and their continued feeling of terror after the massacres .In contrast ,some individuals expressed a willingness to provide information about what happened after the committee contacted them ,but they stated that they did not feel safe speaking in detail over the phone and requested direct interviews instead .The committee responded to the request in some cases by transporting witnesses, such as from Sanobar village to Latakia city ,accompanied by officers from the Ministry of Defense .This allowed for individual interviews between each witness and committee members ,and some witnesses provided detailed statements about the perpetrators of the massacres .In some areas ,the committee sought the help of an Alawite cleric during the interviews to reassure witnesses and enhance their sense of security.

A witness from the Al-Qusour neighborhood in Baniyas reported that the committee was never seen on the ground at all ,and its role was limited to media appearances through interviews with figures known for their loyalty to the new authorities ,which reflected a false and unrealistic image .Another witness indicated that the committee did not enter the affected neighborhoods ,nor did it work to document crimes or communicate with residents. This reinforced the perception that the committee's aim was not to achieve justice but rather to contain public anger and intimidate victims from demanding their rights.

Consequently ,testimonies show that some victims 'families have concerns that the government committee lacks independence and credibility and that it has not been able to build trust with the local community .Indeed ,some testimonies explicitly called for the necessity of forming an independent international committee to ensure justice and reveal the truth amidst what was described as systematic attempts to conceal crimes and restrict access to information .The reasons for the lack of trust among affected communities in the work of the government investigation committee ,according to testimonies ,can be summarized as follows:

- The committee's formation and direct appointment by the head of the executive authority raise doubts about its independence and its ability to issue reports free from the official narrative of events.
- The committee lacks local representation from the affected communities ,and the lack of transparency in its work ,as the decree establishing it includes no obligation to publish the investigation's findings or ensure they are made available to the public ,limits the possibility of public oversight.
- Some witnesses from among the victims 'families felt that neither they nor their relatives were being included in the various stages of the investigation.
- There is no independent oversight mechanism or possibility to challenge the committee's findings or request a review of its conclusions .This renders its findings final and not subject to review or accountability.Finally ,it is worth noting the apparent lack of communication ,to our knowledge ,between the investigation committee and Syrian civil society .The committee has not officially reached out to Syrian organizations working on documentation ,nor has it provided any formal or secure channels for these organizations to share information with it.

The Syrian Center shared a preliminary version of this report with the committee and requested a response to witness statements concerning the committee's work and the lack of trust in it .However ,as of the publication date of this report ,no response has been received.

Nonetheless ,a spokesperson for the committee told Reuters that its final report would be based on testimonies and information collected from more than one thousand individuals, as well as statements from officials and interrogations of detainees<sup>33</sup>.

### **Crackdown on the Press**

The New York Times reported that Syrian authorities effectively closed off the area to foreign journalists as violence escalated ,forcing them to leave <sup>34</sup>.SCM contacted one of the newspaper's journalists ,who confirmed this account.

A journalist's testimony to SCM also illustrates the extent of the restrictions on media coverage of violations in the coastal region .He reported being threatened and insulted by members of the General Security while attempting to conduct street interviews following the March session of the investigation committee .According to the witness ,he was preparing a field

33 Reuters, Syrian forces massacred 1,500 Alawites. The chain of command led to Damascus, June 30, 202512, Updated July 1, 2025, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/investigations/syrian-forces-massacred-1500-alawites-chain-command-led-damascus-202530-06/> (accessed on July 4, 2025).

34 Inside a City Swept by Roving Gunmen ,Deadly Grudges and Fear ,the New York Times ,Available at :<https://www.nytimes.com/20/04/2025/world/middleeast/syria-alawite-massacre.html>) accessed on 27 June.(2025

report that included a public opinion survey on the violations and massacres that took place in the Syrian coast when an armed ,masked patrol stopped him .He was asked to present written authorization ,which he did.

When the patrol inquired about the topic of the report ,he explained that it was focused on the violations that occurred in the coastal region .This angered one of the officers ,who objected to shedding light on what was happening in the coast ,arguing that such attention came too late compared to past violations committed by the regime .When the journalist attempted to clarify the nature of his work and the importance of covering current events without conflating them with previous contexts ,the situation escalated .The officer began making verbal accusations and provocations ,including sectarian questions aimed at identifying the journalist's background and sectarian affiliation.

## VIII .Conclusion and Recommendations

The violations documented in this report ,mostly committed on a sectarian basis ,reveal the profound fragility that continues to threaten civil peace in Syria .This fragility is a result of decades of repression ,lack of accountability ,and deeply rooted societal divisions .It also confirms that the absence of justice and the persistence of impunity only lead to the reproduction of violence and the deepening of social rifts.

Therefore ,these violations cannot be treated as mere individual or isolated transgressions. Instead ,they should be viewed as symptoms of a more profound crisis ,reflecting the need for fundamental reform in the state and societal structure .This requires adopting a comprehensive transitional justice approach that addresses the roots of the conflict, places victims at the heart of the justice process ,and establishes a new phase based on accountability ,equal citizenship ,and the rule of law .Postponing accountability for these crimes ,along with the grave violations committed against Syrians over decades ,or addressing them selectively ,poses a serious obstacle to achieving genuine national reconciliation and threatens the foundations of any effort to build a state based on the rule of law and equal citizenship.

Based on the foregoing ,this report presents a set of recommendations to the investigation committee and the Transitional Government to help ensure a serious and responsible response ;one that delivers justice to the victims and contributes to building a more just future.

## **1. Recommendations to the Government Investigation Committee**

- Adopt a victim-centered approach in all stages of the investigation to ensure respect for their dignity and rights and allow their effective participation ,either directly or through their representatives ,in efforts to uncover the truth and achieve justice.
- Ensure the participation of civil society ,particularly organizations working on documentation and accountability ,as well as experts in gender ,child rights ,victims' rights ,and victim support ,by providing them with direct access to the committee and facilitating cooperation through clear and secure mechanisms for information sharing.
- Enhance the committee's transparency by issuing periodic reports ,publishing clear information about the progress of investigations ,and opening official and secure communication channels that allow families ,human rights organizations ,and civil society to provide information and testimonies without fear.
- Publish the committee's final report publicly and in detail ,including detailed documentation of all types of violations committed ,encompassing killings ,arbitrary detention ,torture, systematic destruction of property ,and discriminatory practices based on identity or opinion.

## **2. Recommendations to the Syrian Transitional Government**

- Ensure the protection of all civilians ,both men and women ,from violence ,violations ,acts of retaliation ,and incitement ,without any discrimination based on religion ,ethnicity, geographic location ,political affiliation ,or any other affiliation.
- Recognize all victims without discrimination ,and guarantee their right to know the truth, access justice ,and obtain effective reparations.
- Establish legal and institutional guarantees to prevent the recurrence of such violations in the future ,including reforming the security and military apparatuses and the judiciary, and promoting a culture of respect for human rights and equal citizenship.
- Ensure that all victims have access to justice and that all perpetrators are held accountable through impartial and transparent procedures ,while providing legal and psychological support to survivors.
- Ensure that the mandate of the National Transitional Justice Body encompasses all violations and crimes without exception ,including those committed in the Syrian Coast and Hama ,and is not limited to a specific period or perpetrator to ensure justice for all victims ,accountability for all perpetrators ,and to promote

- confidence in the transitional process and establish the principle of non-impunity.

### **Ensuring Accountability and Transparency**

- Enable the National Investigation Committee to operate independently and impartially and provide it with the necessary resources to conduct thorough investigations in accordance with international standards.
- Require full cooperation of the security and military agencies with the investigation committee ,ensuring its unimpeded access to witnesses ,sites ,and evidence.
- Allow access for the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria ,as well as other relevant United Nations bodies and competent Syrian and international organizations for documenting violations ,and provide them with safe and direct access to victims ,witnesses ,and sites of violations ,without restrictions or interference.
- Recognize the complementary role that international mechanisms can play ,including the International ,Impartial ,and Independent Mechanism) IIIM ,(in supporting local investigations and providing technical support and expertise necessary to build the capacities of national justice institutions.

### **Protecting Evidence ,Witnesses ,and Victims 'Families**

- Secure crime scenes and prevent tampering with or obliterating evidence.
- Establish safe and confidential channels for giving testimonies and provide effective witness protection mechanisms ,ensuring they are not subjected to retaliation or intimidation ,which encourages their participation in the investigation committee's work and helps reveal the truth.

### **Controlling Security Agencies and Weapons Outside State Control**

- Unify the official uniform for all security personnel ,with a full commitment to wearing badges and ranks and prohibiting face coverings during service.
- Subject military and security personnel to mandatory and regular training on the principles of international humanitarian law ,international human rights law ,and relevant Syrian laws ,particularly those related to the use of force ,arrest ,investigation ,and protection of civilians.
- Restrict the use of weapons exclusively to the state ,according to Article 9 of the Constitutional Declaration ,and prohibit the formation of any armed or paramilitary groups not subject to the state authority.
- Emphasize that the declaration of general mobilization is solely within the authority of the President of the Republic and only after the approval of the National Security Council, under Article 41 of the Constitutional Declaration ,and take strict legal measures against any violation of this order.

## Combating Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence

- Prohibit and criminalize the use of religious platforms for incitement to violence and hatred ,and ensure that religious discourse is not used to entrench sectarian division or incite revenge while emphasizing respect for freedom of belief and the right to expression.
- Launch reliable and transparent official media channels that provide Syrians with accurate information ,thereby contributing to the reduction of rumors and misinformation, especially during times of crisis.
- Introduce national legislation that criminalizes hate speech and incitement to violence, in line with international standards ,while ensuring that the right to freedom of opinion and expression is not prejudiced.
- Take strict legal action against individuals or entities that spread hate speech ,regardless of their affiliations or positions.
- Enhance community awareness of the dangers of hate speech and its impact on civil peace through educational programs that involve civil society organizations ,media outlets ,and educational and religious institutions.

**Annex I :Entities Suspected of Involvement in the Violations**

According to information gathered by the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression through witness interviews and open sources ,the following entities are suspected of involvement in the violations:

	Suspected Party Involved	Area
1	<b>Suleiman Shah Brigade</b>	Areas :Al-Qusour and Al-Murouj neighborhoods- Baniyas) Tartous ,(Dalia and Qarfeis - Latakia
2	<b>Hamza Division</b>	Areas :Al-Qusour and Al-Murouj neighborhoods- Baniyas) Tartous(
3	<b>Jaish al-Islam</b>	Areas :Al-Sanoubar and Bustan al-Basha - Latakia
4	<b>Sultan Murad Division</b>	Areas :Al-Sanoubar and Bustan al-Basha - Latakia
5	<b>Battalions formerly affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham/currently under the direct authority of the Ministry of Defense in the Syrian Interim Government ,including Battalion400</b>	Areas :Al-Qusour and Al-Murouj neighborhoods in Baniyas ,Al-Sanoubar ,Bustan al-Basha ,Dalia ,and Qarfeis in Latakia
6	<b>Groups from neighboring villages</b>	Area where violations occurred: Al-Aziziyah village - Sahl al-Ghab (Described as known to local residents due to geographic proximity, but no confirmed affiliation with any specific faction)

Additionally ,witness testimonies noted the presence of foreign fighters among the factions that committed violations in :Al-Qusour and Al-Murouj neighborhoods in Baniyas, as well as the villages of Al-Sanoubar and Bustan al-Basha in Latakia.

## Annex II :List of Victims 'Names

(For legal use only - not for public dissemination)

## Annex III: List of Digital Evidence

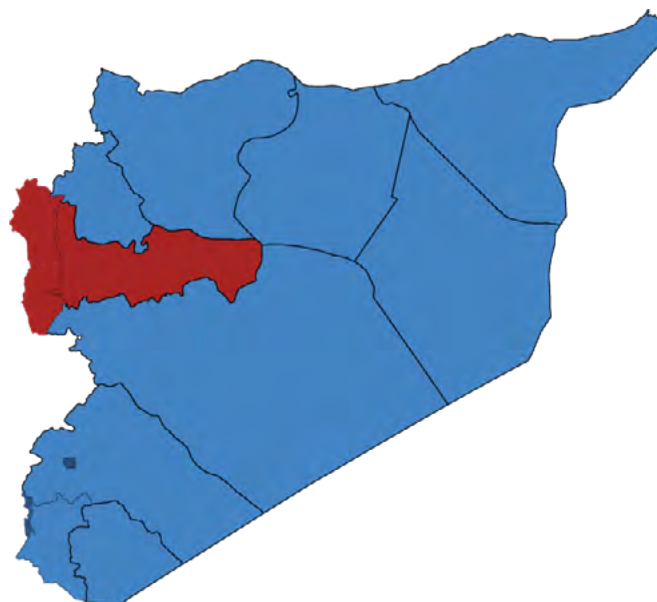
(For legal use only - not for public dissemination)

## Annex IV: List of Individuals Suspected of Committing Crimes

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## Annex V: Interactive Map of Areas Where Violations Occurred

Explore the interactive map by clicking [here](#) or directly on the map.





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