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Western-backed HTS Islamists organise executions in Syria



Members of the new Syrian security forces stand outside a security building in Nawa, near Daraa, Syria, January 4, 2025. [AP Photo/Mosa'ab Elshamy]

Reports of excessive violence and executions of members of religious minorities are increasing following the seizure of power by the Islamist HTS militia in Syria. According to a report by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) from earlier this week, 35 extrajudicial executions took place in just 72 hours. The perpetrators were fighters from the ruling HTS (Haiat Tahrir al-Sham–Levant Liberation Organisation) and other Islamist terrorist groups associated with HTS.

The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights stated that the fighters “took retaliatory measures and settled old scores with members of the Alawite minority, to which [ousted President] Bashar al-Assad belongs,” taking advantage of “the state of chaos, the proliferation of weapons and their links with the new authorities.”

The monitoring centre spoke of “arbitrary mass arrests, cruel mistreatment, attacks on religious symbols, mutilation of corpses, summary and brutal executions of civilians,” which

“show an unprecedented level of cruelty and violence.” The victims were “members of minority sects such as Alawites, Shiites and Murshids in villages throughout the [Homs] region,” the centre said.

In a statement, the Civil Peace Group also announced that there had been civilian casualties in a “security operation” in several villages in the Homs region. The group “condemned the unjustified violations,” including the killing of unarmed men. According to SOHR, arrests were made after the “serious violations and mass executions that have claimed the lives of 35 people in the last 72 hours.”



A US-backed opposition fighter steps on a broken bust of former Syrian President Hafez Assad in Damascus, Syria, Sunday December 8, 2024. [AP Photo/Hussein Malla]

Apparently, the HTS authorities, who regularly justify the Islamist terror against minorities as a crackdown on alleged supporters of the Assad regime that collapsed in early December 2024, felt compelled to distance themselves from the violent excesses to a certain extent. Several people have been arrested for unspecified “violations” in the area west of the city of Homs, which is home to over a million people, according to government sources.

The official Syrian news agency SANA reported that the authorities had accused members of a “criminal group” of posing “as members of the security services.” “Dozens of members of local armed groups under the control of the new Sunni Islamist coalition and who participated in the security operations have been arrested,” the SOHR report said.

In fact, the terror reveals the character of the HTS regime, which is supported and courted by the West. The militia is the successor organisation of the al-Nusra Front, which was formerly allied with al-Qaeda. Its former emir, Abu Mohammad al-Julani, who was appointed Syrian

transitional president on 29 January under his real name, Ahmed al-Sharaa, swore “allegiance” to the then al-Qaeda leader Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri in a video message in 2013. In response, al-Qaeda provided al-Julani with fighters and weapons that al-Nusra used for deadly terrorist attacks that killed countless civilians.

Another notorious Islamist terrorist in al-Julani’s transitional government is Justice Minister Shadi al-Waisi. In his role as an al-Nusra Front judge, he personally took part in and organised public executions. A video recorded in Hafasraja in 2015 shows al-Waisi ordering the execution of a woman he had previously convicted of prostitution. In the video, he can be seen first personally pronouncing the sentence and then giving the executioner a sign to carry out his bloody work. The execution was carried out with a shot to the head.

Since taking power in Damascus last December with the support of NATO forces, the HTS leaders have continued the terror despite their publicly more moderate rhetoric. The latest executions are just the tip of the iceberg. Since the beginning of 2025, “there has been a dramatic escalation of attacks and retaliatory actions by armed groups in various Syrian provinces,” according to another SOHR report. Some of these groups are affiliated with the Military Operations Administration, i.e., the new government, and “attack civilians for political and sectarian motives.”

Since the beginning of the year, SOHR has documented 91 murders and eliminations as a result of reprisals in various Syrian provinces, killing 190 people, including five women, the report said. Among others, there have been deaths in Damascus (3), Rif Dimashq (14), Homs (91), Hama (46), Latakia (15), Aleppo (6), Tartus (9), Idlib (4), al-Suwaida (1) and Deir Ezzor (1).

It is significant that the Western media hardly report on Islamist terror in Syria. The reasons for this are obvious. On the one hand, the NATO powers see the new rulers in Damascus as important allies in the imperialist subjugation of Syria and the entire Middle East. As with the genocide against the Palestinians, the main aim is to strengthen Israel’s military position and to eliminate Iran and Russia as power factors in the region. At her meeting with al-Julani in Damascus at the beginning of January, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) called for Russia to give up its military bases in Syria.

Another reason for the silence, especially in the German media, is the plans of the ruling class to deport hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees. Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated in the Bundestag (parliament) on Wednesday, in a session which was dominated by anti-refugee agitation and the boosting of the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD): “We are also looking very closely at developments in Syria. As soon as the situation on the ground allows, we will

also carry out deportations of criminals there.” He said he was discussing this “with the heads of government of the federal states, just as we have repeatedly made far-reaching decisions in this circle in recent years.”

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