



October 14, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20451

Re: Multi-Faith Letter Condemning Religious Violence in Syria

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We, the undersigned members of diverse faith and advocacy groups, greatly appreciate the Trump Administration's commitment to equal rights for Syrian religious minorities under the Syrian Transitional Government headed by President Ahmed Al-Sharaa. President Donald J. Trump highlighted this issue in his first meeting with Mr. Al-Sharaa, Vice President J.D. Vance emphasized this commitment in his rousing plenary address at the 2025 IRF Summit, and you said in March 2025: "The United States stands with Syria's religious and ethnic minorities, including its Christian, Druze, Alawite, and Kurdish communities," demanding accountability for violations of their rights.

In light of this, we feel compelled to express our grave concerns about increasing violence against these religious minorities, legal discrimination, and extremist policies. Serious changes must be made, or Syria could become an Islamist state that subjugates or drives out religious minorities or is divided by civil war. U.S. economic and national security interests in the success of Mr. Al-Sharaa's government will best be served by changing this trajectory to create an inclusive, decentralized Syrian governmental system with equal rights based on citizenship, not faith or ethnicity. Our recommendations are strongly supported by Christian and other faith leaders in Syria.

Since March 2025, Alawite communities and Christians living in their midst in Idlib have faced brutal attacks resulting in nearly 2,000 deaths, displacement of hundreds of thousands, and destruction of homes and businesses. Atrocities, carried out by armed forces and irregular militias loyal to President Al-Sharaa, included executions of entire families and the ongoing abduction and abuse of women and girls (72 documented cases), with almost no accountability despite public documentation of the perpetrators' identities.

Druze communities have been targeted, starting in Damascus in March 2025 and in Suwayda since mid-July. Full-scale government military attacks caused the deaths of over 1,600 Druze and Christians (including U.S. citizens), displacement of nearly half the Suwayda population, destruction of religious buildings, infrastructure, and hospitals, and an ongoing siege. Perpetrators documented mass killings and summary executions based on religious affiliation. Abductions of women and children as spoils of war were authorized by Sunni cleric's religious fatwas. Israeli intervention alone prevented larger casualties.

Christians throughout Syria fear they will be the next target of mass atrocities. Since Mr. Al-Sharaa came to power, churches and individuals have faced widespread threats, attacks, and extortion. The shocking bombing of Mar Elias Church in June 2025 in Damascus killed or injured a third of its congregation. In areas under the Transitional Government's sole control, Christians are defenseless against threats from Syrian armed forces and Islamist militias, which the government is unwilling or unable to control.

Alongside targeted attacks, the Syrian Transitional Government has adopted increasingly hardline Islamist policies, including strict dress codes, closure of alcohol-serving establishments, halting wedding celebrations, and imposing Islamic religious mandates in education. The interim Syrian "Arab" constitution was created without meaningful input from minorities or moderate Sunnis. Sharia is the primary source of law, only Muslims can be President, and equal protection is denied to Syria's non-Abrahamic communities like Alawites, Druze, and Yazidis. Syria's military forces are composed of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the Syrian National Army (SNA) militants, plus Islamist foreign fighters from Al Nusra, etc. All have long histories of attacking and violating the human rights of Syrian religious and ethnic minorities and women.

Christians, Kurds, Yazidis, and other minorities living in the Democratic Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria (DAANES) are defended by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and currently enjoy a pluralistic, non-sectarian, and inclusive model of governance system with religious freedom and equal rights for all citizens, including women. Uniquely, Aramaic, the language of Jesus, is an official language in addition to Arabic and Kurdish. The Transitional Government seems poised to attack DAANES because the SDF will not lay down its arms and accept imposition of a unitary Islamist state. DAANES simply seeks to preserve existing freedoms for its citizens within a decentralized Syria, and the examples of Latakia and Suwayda make clear that surrendering arms to the Transitional Government is not a viable option. Indeed, the SDF and DAANES have fought HTS, SNA, and Al Nusra since 2011 and harbor no illusions about their intentions toward an undefended civilian population.

We believe in the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We urge the U.S. government to take decisive action to protect Syria's vulnerable communities by ***renewing public U.S. commitments to religious freedom and equal rights for all Syrian citizens and announcing clear conditions for obtaining or keeping sanctions waivers based on progress in achieving the following goals.***

1. **Safety and Accountability for all Minority Groups:** Violence against minority communities must stop. Perpetrators of recent and past violence must be held accountable, including members of Syrian security forces. Formal judicial proceedings, return of abducted women and children, restitution and compensation for deaths, injuries, and destroyed property are needed to eliminate a culture of impunity and restore faith in the central government.
2. **Equal Citizenship Under Law:** Swift revisions should create a Syrian constitution and laws that ensure equal rights based on citizenship, not ethnicity or religion. Women should have equality with men. A Syria wide constitutional drafting process is required in which all components (religious, political, etc.) participate with support from the U.S. and other nations.
3. **Decentralization:** The adopted Syrian governmental system should permit local self-governance and self-protection for minority communities so that they may preserve the rights and equality for which they have fought since the start of the Syrian Civil War, possibly mirroring our own federal/state system. In particular, local security forces should reflect the religious and ethnic makeup of the communities they protect.

Thank you for your leadership and long-standing commitment to international religious freedom. We look forward to working with you to support a Syria where all people can live in peace and dignity.

Sincerely,

ORGANIZATIONS

IN DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANS

LAW & LIBERTY TRUST

Mercury One

Save the Persecuted Christians

Shai Fund

THE NAZARENE FUND

International Institute for Religious Freedom

American Islamic Congress

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

Sunshine Ministries

Religious Freedom Coalition

International Association for Religious Freedom US Chapter

ALEVI PHILOSOPHY CENTER ASSOCIATION

Alawites Association of the United States

Oliva International, LLC

Interfaith League Against Poverty-US/Pak

Friends of Thien Am Monastery

SIGS Security & Intelligence Group

Coptic Solidarity

Path of YahRa Spiritual Society

The Ohr Torah Interfaith Center

Indigenous Ministries International

Shia Rights Watch

Levant Council of the United States

International Christian Concern

Sallux ECPM Foundation

Covenant Nonprofit

PowerMentor

Stichting Schlomo Nederland

Genocide Watch

European Syriac Union ESU

Jubilee Campaign

Jewish Coalition Against Workplace Antisemitism

HFN

American Muslim & Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council
Prayer Pioneers
Interfaith Council of Greater Sacramento
AMERICAN SYRIAC UNION
Alliance for Vietnam's Democracy
Institute for the Documentation of Human Rights Violations against Religious Minorities in the Levant
International Association for Religious Freedom
DIASPORA ALLIANCE
Human Rights Without Frontiers
Catholics for Trump/Vance
Christ's Mandate for Missions

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