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Revenge Killings Targeting Assad Regime Affiliates (December 2024 - May 2025)



Aleppo

Since the collapse of the Assad government in early December, SJAC has been tracking the violence erupting across Syria to identify trends emerging in targeted victims. After analyzing media reports and interviews conducted by SJAC documenters with Syrians on the ground, SJAC has documented a pattern of revenge killings that targeted Assad government affiliates across the country. While the first pattern SJAC identified was the [targeting of Alawite civilians](#) in Homs city, this report highlights how Syrian men from various backgrounds are being targeted based on their affiliation with the former government's military or security forces and/or the violations they may have committed against civilians. SJAC strongly condemns these extrajudicial killings and calls on the Syrian government to investigate each incident and hold perpetrators accountable.

Late last week, Syrian president Ahmed Al-Sharaa [issued](#) a decree establishing a national transitional justice authority. SJAC views this announcement as a necessary step towards achieving comprehensive transitional justice in Syria. If implemented properly, the work of the transitional justice committee may provide Syrians with the justice and accountability they hope to see for individuals who committed major violations during the conflict, which could help quell the current pattern of extrajudicial reprisal killings.

Revenge Killings - Regime Affiliates

Since December 2024, SJAC has documented reprisal killings targeting specific male individuals who were allegedly involved with the former government’s military or intelligence apparatus. As SJAC [noted](#) previously, these attacks are based on the victim’s alleged involvement with the Assad regime and past violations committed against Syrians, and not their sectarian background. These killings target individuals associated with the Assad government in a variety of ways, whether officially as part of the military or intelligence, or unofficially as informants. The victims include Sunni, Alawi, and Shia individuals. In most of these cases, the perpetrators are simply listed as “unknown armed men.”

These attacks span several areas of the country, including Aleppo, Daraa, Damascus, Deir Ezzor, Homs, Hama, Latakia, and other governorates, and target a variety of affiliates within Assad’s military and intelligence. For example, a low-ranking officer in the regime’s military security was shot dead in his apartment in Damascus in February. The report [notes](#) that the deceased was allegedly responsible for several assassinations of opposition figures earlier in the conflict and ran two notorious checkpoints in Daraa, where civilians were regularly subject to violations such as arbitrary detention and extortion. Similar incidents continued throughout early May, with unknown men riding a motorcycle, shooting and killing [Zaidan Al-Hawadriya](#) in Hama city, a man who allegedly worked on behalf of the Air Force Intelligence under Assad.

Individuals affiliated with pro-regime militias have also been killed. In February, the body of Abu Issa Al-Mashhadani, the leader of an Iranian-affiliated militia, Fawj 47, was [discovered](#) in Deir Ezzor. The group was well-known for committing violations against civilians. In early May, unknown men killed [Yahya Mujbir](#), a man accused of working for the pro-regime Liwa Al-Quds militia in Aleppo city. In addition, alleged informants such as Imam [Omar Hour](#)i and others who may not have served in an official capacity have also been targeted. In March, unknown men riding a motorcycle in Aleppo city [killed](#) Ahmed Naasani, who held a position in a state institution under Assad but was better known for funding pro-Assad propaganda during the conflict.

A summary of several additional incidents is available below. The list is not exhaustive, but rather is intended to provide readers with additional information about this pattern of killings.

Name	Alleged Affiliation	Location	Date	Circumstances of death
Abdel Sitar Harmoush	Leader of an armed group affiliated with Military Security	Hama city	January 2025	Shot
Ali Maraab	Informant	Jableh, Latakia	February 2025	Shot
Mohammad Fawaz Subhi Al-Obayd Al-Naser	Military security	Al-Husseiniyah village, Deir Ezzor	March 2025	Found dead with gunshots to the head

Adel Mohammad Al- Talab Al- Ghazali	Officer in military security	Daraa	February 2025	Unspecified - Found dead
Raad and Diab Mashaal	Regime army	Aleppo city	April 2025	Unspecified
Khalid Al- Omar	Al-Taramih Forces (affiliated with the regime's 25th Special Forces Division)	Qamhana, Hama governorate	May 2025	Unspecified - found dead
Imad Al-Masri	Prominent "shabih," who held a close relationship with Asmaa Al- Assad	Hama city	May 2025	Shot
Adham Rajoub	Confirmed relationship with the intelligence and security forces	Homs city	May 2025	Shot

Syrian Perspectives on Ongoing Revenge Killings

Syrians' responses to these events are not uniform. In comments on social media posts, some condemn the killings as they are occurring without due process. One commenter claimed that proper trials would be preferable to a general climate of assassinations and violence, even if Assad affiliates only received life sentences instead of the death penalty. However, in other posts, commenters expressed their satisfaction with the killings. These attacks and reactions are concerning, as they reflect some Syrians' willingness to disregard due process in favor of revenge that they can carry out themselves.

Based on the comments on social media posts and documenters' conversations with individuals on the ground, the desire for vigilante-style "justice" is bolstered by some Syrians' frustration with the new government's lack of progress on transitional justice and willingness to hold perpetrators accountable. Select comments reveal that some Syrians perceive the government's actions as perpetuating the executions. Several comments on the posts announcing the above killings directly

allege that the transitional government's lack of action is driving such behavior. One stated: "There's no application of justice by the state. People want to take it for themselves," with similar comments highlighting that, in their view, the government's reluctance to arrest and prosecute former regime thugs/shabiha will result in continued killings.

Inadequate Transitional Justice Measures Exacerbate Revenge Killings

Commentators on social media posts also affirm that the lack of transparent transitional justice measures may be contributing to the killings. They pointed to several inadequate measures including pardons for senior Assad officials, and others lamented the transitional government's releases of suspected pro-Assad individuals. This again suggests that, to some degree, the appetite for extrajudicial revenge killings is further spurred by many Syrians' perception that the transitional government's action on these issues is insufficient.

SJAC also notes that multiple senior pro-Assad officials have obtained "settlements" or agreements of sorts with the new government, which allow them to continue living normally in Syria without fear of arrest or retribution. Deals offered to key members of pro-Assad armed groups, such as the National Defense Forces' [Fadi Saqr](#) and Republican Guard General [Talal Makhoul](#) are prime examples of this phenomenon, which have provoked negative reactions among Syrians.

Further calling into question the government's ability to implement effective transitional justice measures is the fact that government and military officials have held meetings with figures accused of violations against civilians and/or strong ties to Iranian-affiliated militias that committed these violations. The transitional government's Minister of Culture, Mohammad Yassin Saleh, and Jamal Al-Sharaa (Ahmad Al-Sharaa's brother), met with tribal leader [Farhan Al-Marsoumi](#) in April, a man who reportedly built strong relationships with [pro-Iranian militias](#) and the Assad government in Deir Ezzor governorate. The meeting caused an uproar on social media. Not only do these government actions anger Syrians, but they greatly undermine Syrians' confidence in the government's ability to hold perpetrators of past violations accountable. This sentiment will do nothing to curb the extrajudicial executions of individuals strongly suspected of past involvement with the regime's military or security forces.

Conclusion

Given the limited progress made on transitional justice so far, many Syrians remain skeptical about the new government's commitment to facilitate transitional justice within the country. While the government has conducted [security campaigns](#) in major cities since January 2025, and made [arrests](#) of people who held positions in the regime's military and intelligence, the volume and nature of these arrests falls short of appeasing Syrians. Moreover, from the beginning of his governance, Al-Sharaa has not provided clear guidelines on who will benefit from [amnesties](#). As such, the government's willingness to grant "reconciliation" or otherwise [engage](#) with senior pro-Assad leaders undermines the trust Syrians have in the government's ability to engage in criminal accountability processes, giving Syrians further motivation to continue targeting suspected former Assad military and intelligence personnel.

However, some more recent signs may point to upcoming steps toward transitional justice and criminal accountability in Syria. Last week, Al-Sharaa [announced](#) that the government will form a transitional justice committee within 30 days. SJAC will monitor the committee's progress on several key tasks in the coming months. In addition to properly investigating and prosecuting those accused of committing violations, an effective transitional justice body must collaborate with the Syrian people to develop a transparent plan for the issuance of amnesties that includes guidelines for when and in what cases amnesties will be issued. Short-term amnesties may be appropriate for the government to respond to pressing needs and quell violence but should not be issued in an ad hoc manner that leaves Syrians confused and ready to take matters into their own hands. Only with this tangible and transparent progress towards transitional justice will Syria put an end to this pattern of revenge killings.

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