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Christmas tree set alight in Hama and Alawite shrine destroyed in Aleppo (Video)

Christians protested all over Syria and Alawites protested in Aleppo



Riots continue in Syria. Photo - Telegram

Hundreds protest in Syria after Christmas tree set alight: [Video](#)

[Politico](#) (25.12.2024) Demonstrators took to the streets across Syria on Tuesday to protest the burning of a Christmas tree, two weeks after the dramatic toppling of dictator Bashar Assad. Ruling HTS (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) say they have detained the arsonists and promised to restore the tree.

The protests emerged after a video spread on social media showing two masked men setting a Christmas tree on fire on Monday evening in the in the main square of the Suqaylabiyah, a Christian-majority town in the province of Hama.

"We demand the rights of Christians," protesters chanted as they marched through the streets of Damascus. "If we're not allowed to live our Christian faith in our country, as we used to, then we don't belong here any more," a demonstrator [told AFP](#).

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the fighters were foreigners from the Islamist group Ansar al-Tawhid.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the main Islamist faction which led the uprising that toppled President Assad on 8 December, said foreign fighters had been detained over the incident, [BBC reported](#).

Another video footage following the incident showed a religious leader from the ruling HTS holding up a cross in sign of solidarity and promising the crowd that tree would be restored by morning.

European leaders [have welcomed](#) the end of Assad's regime as a "positive development" for Syria and vowed to work together with the new leadership to protect the rights of Syrians and prevent terrorism from rising in the area. (BY [ELENA GIORDANO](#))

Alawites protested after the desecration of the shrine by Islamists: Videos [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#)

[Strana Today](#) (25.12.2024) - In the Syrian provinces, where Alawites live compactly (the toppled Syrian President Bashar Assad belonged to this religious group), protests against the new authorities of the country began.

The video of the riots was published by local telegram channels.

The impetus for them was the information spread in social networks that representatives of the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, who came to power in Syria, burned the Alawite shrine "Abu Abdullah al-Hussein bin Hamdan al-Husibi" and killed five people who were there.

As they write in social networks, armed members of Islamist groups also opened fire on protesters.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Ministry of Internal Affairs accused Assad supporters of organizing protests, saying that they "tried to use rumors and attacked the forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as a result of which several people were killed and injured".

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protests, saying that they "tried to use rumors and attacked forces in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as a result of which several people were killed and injured".

Which Christmas and which future for the Christians of Syria?

HRWF (23.12.2024) – On the eve of Christmas, Christians in Syria and in Europe wonder how their future will look like. Various voices are heard from several parts of the country and from experts abroad about possible perspectives. The celebration of Christmas will be a first test. Here is a short digest of their analyses:

19.12.2024 - Syria: Gunmen fire at Orthodox church - minor damage caused

[CSW](#) - Unidentified gunmen opened fire on an Orthodox church in Hama, Syria yesterday, 18 December. Nobody was hurt in the incident, which caused minor damage to the walls.

Security forces moved quickly to secure the scene and the culprits were arrested on the following morning of 19 December. The Bishop of Hama issued a [statement](#) confirming the incident and the quick response of the local authorities.

In a separate incident in the days following the fall of the Assad regime, a cemetery in the Christian town of Mhareh near Hama was vandalised. The local authorities moved quickly and condemned the incident and vowed to arrest the perpetrators and hold them accountable.

In another incident, a person claiming to be a member of the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) security entered a bar in a Christian neighbourhood in Damascus and attempted to intimidate the owner for serving alcohol. When confronted and asked to show his ID, he tried to run away but was quickly arrested and identified as a former member of a paramilitary group loyal to Assad.

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17.12.2024 – L'Œuvre d'Orient was with the first French mission in Syria in 12 years

[L'Œuvre d'Orient](#)– L'Œuvre d'Orient was alongside the first French diplomatic mission in Syria in twelve years, marked by the raising of the tricolor flag at the French embassy.

Vincent Gelot, country director of L'Œuvre d'Orient, welcomed the delegation to the Study Zone of Bab Tooma, in the historic Christian quarter of Damascus.

This exchange with members of civil society from different communities reflects the ongoing commitment of L'Œuvre d'Orient to local populations.

Jointly supported by L'Œuvre d'Orient and the Crisis Center, the 14 Study Zones in Syria have allowed nearly 10,000 students per month to continue their university studies since the start of the war, offering a space of resilience and solidarity.

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16.12.2024 - Syria: Future of Christianity remains uncertain

[Aid to the Church in Need](#) - Despite Syria's Christian schools reopening - with assurances from rebel authorities that there will be no restrictions on religious practice - concerns remain about the future of Christianity in the country. Local sources who wished not to be named told Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that the mood of the Christian community is subdued yet cautiously optimistic.

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16.12.2024 - Syria: Patriarch Yohanna X and the new Syria: "We Christians are not 'guests' in this land"

[FIDES](#) - "We are here in Damascus, on the street of Al-Marymiya, next to the Umayyad Mosque, and we tell the world that we, as Christians, come from the land of the Levant and the cedars of Lebanon... from the spaces of Homs and the authentic history of Aleppo, from the waterwheels of Hama and the roar of the springs of Idlib, from the sea of Latakia and the Euphrates of Deir ez-Zor.

We are not guests in this land, and we are not children of today or yesterday. We come from Antioch of the Apostles, from this land that has marked the universe with the name of Jesus Christ," said Yohanna X Yazigi, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, about the defining characteristics of the indigenous Christian communities of Syria.

His speech delivered in Damascus after the 15 December Sunday mass, is a sort of "manifesto" of the feelings and expectations of many Syrian Christians regarding the future in post-Assad Syria.

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13.12.2024 - Leaders discuss future of Christianity in Damascus

[Aid to the Church in Need](#) - Christian leaders have welcomed assurances from those controlling Syria, that believers will have a future in the country, after it was seized by rebel forces including jihadist militias last weekend.

Armenian Catholic Bishop Georges Assadourian of Damascus told Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that he met with the rebel leaders in the capital's Four Seasons Hotel, which they have made their headquarters.

The meeting at which he represented the Christian community along with two priests was also attended by a number of ambassadors from overseas governments.

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11.12.2024 - World Council of Churches to church leaders in Syria: 'continue living out your faith with courage and hope'

[WCC](#) - a letter to church leaders in Syria, World Council of Churches general secretary Rev Prof Dr Jerry Pillay extended deep love and solidarity during a time of profound uncertainty and upheaval.

"We recognize that the road ahead is fraught with challenges, as political instability, societal divisions, and economic hardship weigh heavily on your nation," wrote Pillay. "Yet, even in this time of trial, we draw hope from the steadfast witness of your faith and the abiding presence of Christ among you."

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10.12.2024 - Syria: Christian leaders hold 'positive' meeting with Islamic groups

[FIDES](#) - On Monday, 9 December, the leaders of all the Churches and ecclesial communities present in Aleppo met for the second time with representatives of the armed groups that have taken control of the Syrian city. It was the first meeting after President Bashar al Assad fled and the rebels also took Damascus. "We were all present: bishops, priests and religious," said Jesuit Antoine Audo, Chaldean Bishop of Aleppo, in an interview with Fides. It was a "very positive meeting".

The unprecedented summit took place in the Franciscan church and convent, where the Apostolic Vicariate of the Catholics of the Latin Rite is also located. "Their intention," said Bishop Audo, "seems to be to build trust." Expectations are good, especially considering that "we have reached a dead end: there is no electricity, everything is expensive, many people have difficulty feeding themselves."

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10.12.2024 - SYRIA - Aleppo, new meeting between Christian representatives and Islamist groups. Bishop Audo: "they show respect for our traditions"

[FIDES](#) - Aleppo (Agenzia Fides) - On Monday, December 9, the leaders of all the Churches and ecclesial communities present in Aleppo met for the second time with representatives of the armed groups that have taken control of the Syrian city. It was the first meeting after President Bashar al Assad fled and the rebels also took Damascus. "We were all present: bishops, priests and religious," said Jesuit Antoine Audo, Chaldean Bishop of Aleppo, in an interview with Fides. It was a "very positive meeting".

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Armed opposition leadership bans forced wearing of hijab

[Intellinews](#) (09.12.2024) - Syria's armed opposition leadership has issued a decree prohibiting the forced wearing of hijabs, state-owned *Al Watan* reported on December 9.

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is a Sunni Islamist militant group primarily active in Syria, particularly in the rebel-held Idlib Province. Formed in 2017, it is an alliance dominated by Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, which was previously affiliated with al-Qaeda. The group took several key cities on December 7 and 8, [ultimately leading to the downfall](#) of the Assad regime after 53 years.

The directive explicitly forbids compelling women to wear specific clothing or interfering with their choice of attire, according to the newspaper, which published details of the announcement.

"The High Command categorically prohibits forcing women to wear particular clothing or interfering with their right to choose their attire or making claims regarding their appearance," the newspaper quoted the opposition leadership as saying.

The hijab, a traditional head covering in Islamic culture that conceals the hair, ears, and neck, has been a subject of debate in many Middle Eastern nations regarding personal freedom and religious practice.

In a parallel move suggesting broader social reforms, the opposition command also issued strict prohibitions against the persecution of media workers, including employees of Syrian television, broadcasting agencies and social media platform owners.

"Any threats against these individuals are prohibited," *Al-Watan* reported, citing the opposition's statement.

The opposition leadership has established penalties for violations of these directives, with perpetrators facing up to one year in prison.

These measures come as the opposition works to establish its authority and define its governance approach in post-Assad Syria, particularly regarding personal freedoms and press rights.

In a later message by the opposition forces, they announced, "We are here now to build a new Syria that accommodates everyone without exception."

COMECE advocates for peaceful transition after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime

[COMECE](#) (11.12.2024) - *"The bishops of the European Union are closely monitoring developments in Syria and express their hope for an orderly and peaceful transition of power. COMECE urges the new regime to reject sectarianism and extremism while embracing the contributions and unique identities of the many ethnic and religious minorities that enrich the Middle Eastern nation. Furthermore, they call for the protection of religious temples and sites belonging to minorities, the provision of access to humanitarian aid, and the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homes,"* states the Secretariat of COMECE in a note issued on Wednesday, December 11, 2024.

In this context, it is noteworthy that, prior to the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, the President of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), H.E. Mgr. Mariano Crociata, addressed a [letter](#), dated 7 December 2024, to H. Exc. Mgr. Joseph Tobji, Archbishop of Aleppo (Maronite), and to all other bishops of the Christian Churches in Aleppo.

In his message, Mgr. Crociata conveyed the solidarity of the EU bishops, stating: *"With a heart full of solidarity, compassion, and profound concern for the immense suffering and uncertainty that you and your faithful are enduring in Aleppo and other parts of Syria."*

The letter further underscores COMECE's commitment to advocating for the needs of the Syrian people. Mgr. Crociata reaffirmed the organisation's dedication to raising

awareness and mobilising resources to assist in rebuilding homes, restoring livelihoods, and pursuing a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict.

As Syria embarks on this critical chapter in its history, the EU bishops stand united in prayer and action, upholding the values of peace, dignity, and inclusivity for all communities within the nation.

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[COMECE letter to Bishops of Aleppo \[EN\]](#)