



Institute for the Documentation of Human Rights Violations against Religious Minorities in the Levant

WHERE SILENCE ENDS AND JUSTICE BEGINS

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Policy Recommendations for the European Union On Syria Governance & Minority Protection Crisis

Topline

- Syria is undergoing a profound collapse of governance after decades of authoritarian rule and fourteen years of civil war, producing power vacuums that empower extremist actors and directly threaten the strategic interests of the European Union.
- The current authorities [are deeply compromised by corruption](#) and [fail to operate as a government in any conventional or institutional sense](#).*
- Instead, the country is defined by parallel armed authorities, ideological legal systems, and [opaque security structures](#)—conditions that entrench instability and facilitate the rise of extremist networks.
- Indigenous religious and ethnic minorities [face targeted violence, abductions, forced displacement, religious coercion, and cultural erasure](#). The attacks against the Alawites, Druze and Kurds have been widely reported (including by the UN). **Thousands have been killed in these attacks** that were [directed by the current authorities in Damascus](#).
- Current international engagement risks [legitimizing an emerging authoritarian–extremist hybrid governance model](#), undermining international norms and long-term regional stability and [undermine women’s rights in the region](#).

Key Problems

- **[Absence of legitimate governance](#)**: No functioning parliament, [no credible electoral process](#), and no meaningful civil participation. [Rapid decreasing freedom of press](#).
- **[Systemic corruption and fraud](#)**: Credible reports of mock judicial proceedings, fraudulent identity systems, and coercive administrative practices.
- **[Extremist legal framework](#)**: Rule of law increasingly [supplanted by hardline interpretations of religious doctrine lacking due process protections](#).
- **[Integration of extremist actors](#)**: Armed extremist factions [incorporated into governance and security structures](#) without accountability, vetting, or civilian oversight.
- **[Security force complicity](#)**: [Harassment of civilians](#), [protection of perpetrators](#), and [failure to safeguard peaceful minority demonstrators](#).
- **[Deepening destabilization](#)**: [Destruction of cultural and religious heritage](#) and the emergence of a de facto extremist-controlled enclave in Idlib with independent revenue streams.

- **Centralized governance failure:** Decades of enforced authoritarian centralization have produced repression, sectarian violence, and civil war; **replicating this model guarantees renewed conflict.**

Threats to Indigenous Minorities

- Alawite, Druze, Kurdish, Yezidi, and ancient Christian communities face targeted killings, abductions, enslavement, forced displacement, religious persecution, and systematic destruction of sacred sites. As documented by the UN ([Alawites](#), [Druze](#)).
- [These communities lack external protection](#) and exist primarily through locally organized social and religious structures, making them uniquely [vulnerable to coordinated violence and erasure](#).
- Government actions—and deliberate inaction—encourage abuses by portraying minorities as obstacles to a falsely constructed vision of a “unified Syria,” placing these groups at risk of atrocity crimes that may meet the threshold of genocide.

Why This Matters for EU Interests

- Ongoing destabilization fuels extremist safe havens and entrenches long-term regional insecurity.
- The incorporation of transnational jihadist fighters (Uyghurs, Uzbeks, Chechens etc.) into the armed forces represents a profound threat to regional stability and to U.S. strategic interests.
- Governance models emerging in Syria directly contradict European values, international religious freedom norms, and atrocity-prevention commitments.
- It establishes a dangerous precedent as these actors are not confined by national borders and could readily redirect their operations toward neighboring states, including Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and the Gulf countries.
- Failure to act risks establishing a precedent whereby extremist governance structures gain international legitimacy through transitional branding.
- Continued inaction may render the international community complicit in mass atrocity crimes targeting religious minorities. It needs to be noted that all non-Sunni Arab populations combined total around 5 million people. Ongoing atrocities may well create new refugee streams; especially given that there are already several hundred thousand new Internally Displaced Persons in Syria due to the violence in the past year.
- It is unlikely that extremists will prove to be the right force to combat ISIS and guard ISIS prisoners. For this reason, the U.S. already transported thousands of ISIS prisoners to secure prisons in Iraq.

Policy Principles

- Protect indigenous religious and ethnic minorities as both a **strategic necessity and a moral imperative** consistent with Europe’s commitments to religious freedom as a human right. A cynical rejection of human rights commitments means that these commitments have no real meaning for the European Union.
- Reject extremist governance models and the integration of terrorist actors into state institutions.

- Support **federalism and guaranteed local autonomy** as the only viable framework for long-term stability, territorial integrity, and minority protection.
- Reject enforced national “unity” frameworks that erase minority self-governance under the guise of stability.
- Ensure accountability for atrocities and prevent premature international legitimization of abusive actors.

Actionable Recommendations

Immediate

- Reassess the engagement of the European Union with the Syrian Transitional Government (STG), establishing clear red lines regarding extremist integration and minority protection. Parliaments can revoke or suspend recognition of the STG.
- Strengthening documentation, evidence-preservation, and witness-protection efforts to enable future accountability.
- Support democratic political reform, including the development of inclusive governance structures, constitutional reform, and a strengthened civil society sector, to advance a democratic Syria capable of representing and protecting all its people.

Medium Term

- Promote a federal constitutional framework guaranteeing meaningful local autonomy and minority self-governance. Iraq and the UAE have similar governing structures.
- Condition humanitarian and reconstruction assistance on verifiable rule-of-law benchmarks, including civilian judicial oversight and the exclusion of sanctioned extremist actors.
- Strengthen and resource civil society organizations representing indigenous religious and ethnic communities.

Long Term

- Establish UN-mandated or multilateral international monitoring mechanisms to prevent further genocide and mass atrocity crimes.
- Support regional and international dialogue to counter extremist governance models and ideological radicalization.
- Encourage a truth, justice, and reconciliation process inclusive of all communities, grounded in accountability rather than impunity.

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