



2.1.4. Targeting by unidentified actors

After the fall of Assad, reporting indicates a pattern of targeted revenge killings of male individuals allegedly linked to the former regime's military or intelligence services, or who acted as collaborators and informants,[252](#) and were suspected of involvement in past violations.[253](#) These acts were reportedly carried out by unidentified armed individuals, militant factions such as the Special Accountability Force[254](#) and Salafi-jihadi factions such as Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah (Supporters of the Sunnah Battalions).[255](#) Victims have included individuals from Sunni,[256](#) Alawite, and Shia communities.[257](#) Killings were often perpetrated by unidentified gunmen on motorcycles.[258](#) While targeted attacks have occurred across multiple governorates, areas inhabited by ethno-religious minorities such as Homs,[259](#) Hama,[260](#) Aleppo[261](#) and the coastal areas have been particularly affected.[262](#) Revenge and vigilante killings have particularly targeted Alawite-inhabited areas[263](#) although in many cases, it is difficult to distinguish whether individuals were targeted for their perceived association with the former government or for sectarian reasons.[264](#) According to researcher Gregory Waters, most victims of vigilante violence have belonged to Syria's Sunni majority, as perceived Sunni collaborators with the former regime were often easier to target due to rejection within their own communities. At the same time, attacks against members of minority groups frequently generated accusations of sectarian motives, even in cases where victims were later alleged to have been involved in war crimes.[265](#)

According to Syria expert Charles Lister writing in February 2026, revenge and vigilante killings constituted a major source of violence across Syria in 2025, with an average of around 23 killings per week between January and October 2025. This rate reportedly declined by 70 % from October (seven deaths per week) onwards and fell further in early 2026 (three deaths in six weeks).[266](#) However, other sources have assessed in March 2026 that at least 30 civilians have been killed since the start of the year in Homs[267](#) marking a deterioration of the situation and some of the most severe incidents of killings and instability recorded since the regime's fall.[268](#) Some sources attributed the increase in vigilantism and revenge killings to perceived inconsistencies in the authorities' detention practices regarding individuals accused of human rights violations under the former regime. While some high-ranking figures or individuals allegedly linked to major massacres were detained, many former informants and lower-level personnel were said to remain free or to have been released after brief periods of detention.[269](#)

While Charles Lister attributed an assessed reduction in the number of vigilante and revenge killings between October 2025 and January 2026 largely to measures taken by the MoI, including the detention of suspected perpetrators,[270](#) other sources noted that few arrests have been made in relation to the revenge killings[271](#) and that in the majority of documented incidents there has been an absence of publicly announced results from judicial or security investigations,

including the identification of perpetrators or accountability for those responsible.[272](#)

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