



Do you know our suffering?
2 Timothy 3:10–12

SYRIA

Population: 24 million (estimated)

Capital: Damascus

Form of government: Presidential republic under a transitional government

Head of state: Interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa

Religions: Muslims 80–87%, Alawites 7–9%, Druze 3–5%, Christians 2–3%, other 1–2%

Gina A. Zurlo, ed. World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed August 2026).

Still waiting for peace

Christians in a devastated country

The past 15 years have been a bitter nightmare for all Syrians, one that continues unabated. The Arab Spring brought hope for an end to the secular Assad dictatorship, but in Syria it devolved into a bloody civil war. Over 500,000 people have died, more than 6 million have fled abroad, and another 7 million have been internally displaced. The destruction of the country was accompanied by a deterioration of its economic and humanitarian situation: 9 out of 10 Syrians live below the poverty line, and 2 out of 3 depend on outside aid for survival. This immense hardship affected everyone in the country, including the Christian minority, with the exception of a few regime cronies. Due to the lack of prospects and the tense security situation, many Christian families chose to emigrate. While Christians comprised approximately 10% of Syria's population in 2010, only 200,000 to 300,000 Christians now remain, representing 2–3% of the total population.

The radical Islamist leadership

In early December 2024, the Assad regime suddenly was overthrown, an event celebrated by many Syrians as liberation and a new beginning. However, many Christians and members of other minorities suspected Islamist terror and a renewed lack of freedom. The coup was led by the Islamist terrorist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), headed by Ahmad al-Sharaa, previously known primarily by his nom de guerre Mohammad al-Jolani. He had held leading positions in both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State before splitting off to form Jabhat al-Nusra, which he then merged with other radical Islamist groups to create HTS. Several members of the current government were also formerly members of HTS. Despite this history, the new government quickly gained international recognition, sanctions were lifted, and meetings were held with Arab and Western leaders.

Violence against Christians and other minorities

The radical Islamist orientation of the new leadership was soon reflected in massive violence against minorities: In March 2025, members of the security forces and Sunni tribal fighters murdered approximately 1,500 Alawites. In late April and early May 2025, Druze suburbs of Damascus were attacked. In July, the violence turned against the southern province of Suwada, which is predominantly inhabited by Druze. Here, too, over 2,000 people lost their lives, villages were burned down, and over 200,000 people were displaced. After months of aggression, Kurdish-controlled areas in Aleppo and northeastern Syria were violently seized in early January 2026. Hundreds of thousands were displaced once again. The most devastating blow for Christians was a suicide attack in June 2025 on the Mar Elias Church in the Damascus suburb of Dwaila, which killed 25 people. The violence threatens religious services and Christian gatherings. Following riots and vandalism against Christian businesses, numerous Palm Sunday processions across the country were canceled in 2026.

In addition to these violent riots, the current lack of law and order in Syria leads to almost daily violent and deadly attacks against individual members of minority groups, with Christians being particularly affected. Under Assad, Christians were mostly able to pursue their activities without harassment and enjoyed a degree of security within their neighborhoods. However, now, due to security concerns, religious services are being canceled, and Muslims are increasingly displacing Christians from their traditional neighborhoods. The sense of security among Christians has drastically diminished once again.

The country's economy remains stagnant, and many of the measures taken by the government are considered ineffective and, in some cases, even harmful by experts.

Despite billions in investment pledges and the lifting of many sanctions, no discernible reconstruction strategy has been implemented more than a year after the coup and the formation of the new government. The increasing persecution of Christians and the continuing dire situation in the country have led to a renewed surge in the emigration of Christians, especially young people. Those left behind are impoverished families, senior citizens, and the sick, who depend on outside support. Hudda (name changed), a Christian woman, reports: "I live at home with my 83-year-old mother and my son, who is partially paralyzed."

There is hope!

Movements toward Christ, particularly among non-Christian minorities, offer encouragement. For example, thousands of Druze believers are known. In the north, increasing numbers of Kurds are turning to Christianity. Many have been displaced multiple times during the civil war and were forced to leave their possessions behind once again in January 2026. Nevertheless, they continue to hold fast to Jesus. The renewed violence in Syria has led Kurds to seek alternatives to Islam and find new hope in Jesus Christ. While only a few believers were known around the turn of the millennium, churches are now growing. The pastor of the Kurdish community in Aleppo reports: "Earlier in history, there were no Kurdish Christians. Today, this has become a reality." However, because they come from a Muslim background, they have repeatedly faced hostility from their own families and radical Islamic groups. Under the new Islamist government and the prevailing lack of legal protection, they are more vulnerable than before. Similarly, devout Druze repeatedly experience persecution from their families and, as part of the Druze minority, are at risk due to the fragile security situation. Nevertheless, they know that God is with them.

WE PRAY

- For steadfastness and renewed hope through the risen Christ for Christians in Syria.
- For hope for Christians and God's call to remain and be a light.
- For healing and comfort for the wounded and the grieving.
- For a growing movement toward Jesus among the Kurds and Druze, as well as a revival among the Sunni Arabs.
- For peace and justice, reconciliation, and a healing reckoning with the brutal past in Syria.
- For an improvement in the humanitarian and economic situation.
- For repentance and conversion among perpetrators of violence.
- For Syrians scattered around the world, that they may come to know Christ and bring the hope of the Gospel to their families and friends in Syria.