



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND

Press Release 11.02.2025 / Syria / Latakia / ACN call for prayer
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Aid to the Church in Need calls for intense prayer for Syria amid violence and uncertainty

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) expresses its deep concern over the escalating violence in Syria, particularly in the coastal region, where hundreds of civilians have fallen victim to indiscriminate attacks. The situation has created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, also for Christian communities, who have already suffered greatly over the past decade.

According to sources in Latakia close to the charity, who ACN prefers to keep anonymous for security reasons, last Friday was described as “a very black and painful day” in the cities of Tartus, Baniyas, Jabla, and Latakia, and the surrounding villages. The source reported: “Massacres against many Alawites, often indiscriminately, in response to an ambush by some Alawite militants that killed about 20 members of the new security forces.”

The same source stated: “The number of victims is very sad; the majority were civilians, more than 600, who lost their lives, including young people, women, university doctors, and pharmacists. Some families with their children were killed in cold blood.” Among the deceased were also members of Christian communities, such as “a father and son from an evangelical church in Latakia, who were stopped in their car and killed, as well as the father of a priest in Baniyas.”

Furthermore, reports indicate that homes and vehicles were looted, affecting all but also Christians, forcing some families to take refuge in the homes of Sunni friends. In the Christian village of Belma, “where there are no weapons and most of the residents are elderly, the population endured two days of terror, with the sanctity of homes violated and property stolen.”

Meanwhile, the Apostolic Vicariate of the Latin Community in Syria has issued a statement expressing its deep concern over these attacks on innocent civilians. In the document, signed by Bishop Hanna and dated March 9, 2025, it states:

“We join the voice of every honest and patriotic person in this country, emphasizing our rejection of all forms of violence, revenge, and retaliation based on sectarian and religious grounds. We appeal to the country's authorities to quickly put an end to these attacks, which are inconsistent with all human, moral and religious values.”

The statement also mentions President Ahmed Al-Sharaa’s promise to hold accountable those who attack civilians and to implement “the necessary transitions to lead the country toward security.” Furthermore, it reiterates the commitment to Syria’s territorial unity and rejects any attempt to divide the country.



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In his Sunday of Orthodoxy homily, delivered on March 9, 2025, at the Mariamite Cathedral in Damascus, Patriarch John X also addressed the violence in the coastal region and issued an urgent appeal to President Al-Sharaa:

“The tragic events unfolding in Syria’s coastal region have claimed the lives of many civilians and public security personnel, leaving numerous others wounded. However, the majority of the victims were not affiliated with any militant factions; rather, they were innocent, unarmed civilians, including women and children. The sanctities and dignities of the people have been violated, and the slogans and chants being used are spreading division, fuelling sectarianism, and undermining civil peace.”

He referenced the looting and violence in Baniyas, in the Al-Qusour neighbourhood, where “residents were forced to leave their homes only to be executed, and then their belongings were stolen.”

He also denounced the desecration of religious symbols, declaring: “The icon of the Virgin Mary has been smashed, trampled upon, and desecrated. She is the Virgin Mary, whom all Muslims honour alongside us, and whom the Holy Qur’an dedicated an entire chapter to – Surah Maryam – affirming that God chose her and made her the most honoured among all women of the world.”

Addressing President Al-Sharaa, the Patriarch urged the restoration of security and stability for all Syrians without distinction, reaffirming his rejection of sectarianism and calling for national unity and peaceful coexistence.

Beyond this crisis, the Christian community, together with the rest of the population in Syria, faces growing uncertainty following the takeover of power by Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which has further intensified their vulnerability in various regions of the country.

In light of this tragedy, Regina Lynch, Executive President of Aid to the Church in Need, has issued a call to prayer:

“In these moments of pain and suffering, we turn to the only true source of peace: prayer. We ask all the faithful to raise their voices to the Lord, trusting in His love and power to bring comfort to those who need it most. May Our Lady of Syria protect the people in this country, that has endured too many wounds over the past decade. Now, more than ever, we must pray for its healing and future. May faith keep us united and may hope in Christ illuminate this suffering nation.”