



**Lemkin Institute**  
for Genocide Prevention  
and Human Security

## **Statement on the Fall of Bashar al-Assad's Regime in Syria**

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security stands in solidarity with the Syrian people as they mark the end of Bashar al-Assad's regime, a brutal chapter in Syria's history characterized by relentless human rights violations and profound suffering.

The fall of the Assad regime on December 8 marked a pivotal moment in modern Middle Eastern history and opened the door for transformative change in Syria. For over 53 years, the Assad family ruled with an iron fist, perpetuating a legacy of brutality, oppression, and impunity. The sudden collapse of this regime, following a rapid and sweeping rebel offensive, reflects the culmination of decades of systemic failure, regional instability, and the resilience of a people yearning for freedom and dignity.

While the removal of a regime responsible for widespread atrocities, including the killing of an estimated 500,000 people during the civil war, represents a moment of relief for many Syrians, it also ushers in profound uncertainty. The liberation of regime-held cities, the release of thousands of prisoners, and the reunification of communities long separated by conflict are undeniable victories. However, the coming months will test Syria's ability to achieve a democratic transition that prioritizes justice, inclusivity, and human security.

The Assad regime's fall presents an urgent opportunity to address the crimes against humanity and genocide perpetrated during its reign. These include targeted violence against Sunni families and the Sunni population, mass detentions, enforced disappearances, systematic torture, the infamous cruelty of the Sednaya Prison, and the use of chemical weapons against civilians. The regime's chemical weapons attacks, particularly the 2013 Ghouta attack that killed 1,400 civilians and the 2017 Khan Shaykhun attack, symbolize the depths of its brutality. As

international actors and local organizations engage with Syria's transitional period, they must prioritize mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable and provide reparations for victims.

The release of thousands of detainees from the regime's notorious prisons underscores the urgency of addressing Syria's carceral legacy. Families searching for missing loved ones deserve truth and transparency. Transitional justice mechanisms, including truth commissions, victim support programs, and criminal trials, must be established to ensure that those responsible for war crimes—whether members of the former regime, rebel factions, or external actors—are brought to justice.

The Syrian people have made it clear that they demand a free Syria for everyone. Any transitional government must reflect the diverse mosaic of Syria's ethno-religious communities, including Arabs, Kurds, Druze, Christians, and Alawites. The principles of the 2011 revolution—freedom, justice, and dignity—must guide this transition. Civil society organizations, local councils, and grassroots movements should be empowered to lead the rebuilding process, ensuring that the voices of ordinary Syrians are at the forefront.

In respect to the security of Syria's minority populations, the Lemkin Institute is deeply concerned about the roles of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) in the post-Assad period. Both groups have histories of human rights abuses and ideologies that conflict with the democratic aspirations of many Syrians. With US support, Turkey has actively been pursuing genocidal expansion in northern Syria since 2019. Reports of atrocities against Kurds and other minorities by these groups further underscore the need for vigilance. The international community must monitor and pressure these groups to adhere to human rights standards and resist authoritarian tendencies.

Furthermore, Syria's transitional period is vulnerable to exploitation by external actors. Turkey's military influence, Israel's recent incursions, and potential efforts by Gulf states to shape Syria's political future risk undermining Syrian sovereignty. Additionally, the push by some European and neighboring states to halt the asylum seeking process and to forcibly repatriate Syrian refugees raises serious ethical and safety concerns. The refugee crisis has left millions in limbo, facing precarious conditions in host countries. Addressing this humanitarian catastrophe must involve creating safe and voluntary conditions for their return while safeguarding their rights and dignity.

As Syria transitions, addressing the humanitarian crisis must be a top priority. Decades of war have devastated infrastructure, displaced millions, and created generational trauma. International aid must focus on rebuilding essential services, supporting displaced communities, and fostering conditions that allow refugees to return voluntarily, safely, and with dignity.

The international community must also provide substantial support to grassroots Syrian organizations that have been the backbone of resistance and resilience throughout the conflict. These groups, including women's organizations, youth movements, and local councils, are essential to building a democratic and inclusive Syria.

The Lemkin Institute calls on the United Nations, international human rights organizations, and state actors to:

1. Support the establishment of an inclusive transitional government that reflects the will of the Syrian people and ensures minority representation.
2. Implement robust accountability mechanisms to address war crimes and human rights abuses committed by all parties.
3. Provide immediate humanitarian assistance and long-term development aid to rebuild Syria's infrastructure and institutions.
4. Safeguard the rights of Syrian refugees and resist efforts to force repatriation under unsafe conditions.
5. Monitor and mitigate the influence of external actors seeking to exploit Syria's transition for geopolitical gain.
6. Apply genocide prevention tools to the entirety of the international community's involvement in Syria's future.

Syria's future depends on the collective efforts of its people and the international community to create a just, democratic, and inclusive society. The fall of the Assad regime is not the end of Syria's struggle but the beginning of a new chapter. The Lemkin Institute stands in solidarity with Syrians as they navigate this critical moment and renew our commitment to supporting their pursuit of justice, freedom, and peace.