

4.10.4. Alawites

Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, this document has been reviewed and updated. Please consult '[Interim Country Guidance: Syria \(2025\)](#)'

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: September 2020

*Minor updates added: February 2023

COI summary

[Main COI reference: [Targeting 2020](#), 10.6, pp. 82-84]

It is estimated that Alawites make up between 10 % and 13 % of Syria's population (around 2.1 million persons). They reside in the coastal side of Syria, but they are also located in Homs and Hama governorates, as well as in the city of Damascus. The Alawite community has close connection with the Assad regime [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.6, p. 82]. The president's family and large parts of the informal power structure around him are Alawites [[Security 2019](#), 1.1, p. 11]. They hold key regime positions, dominate the police and the army and have high-ranking positions in elite military and militia units. They have higher chances of obtaining employment in the public sector compared to other groups such as Christians, Sunni Arabs or Kurds. Generally, Alawites were seen by the GoS as loyal [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.6, p. 82].

According to sources, almost every Alawite family was affected by the war. Many Alawites died during the war which led many young Alawites to hide and avoid conscription. In some villages and towns, 60 % - 70 % of the Alawite young males were either killed or wounded during the war, especially in Latakia and Tartous governorates. [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.6, pp. 83-84]

Alawite opposition activists were targeted by the government forces for arbitrary arrest, torture, detention and killing. [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.6, p. 83]

Moreover, the Alawite community is targeted by different non-state actors. Alawi shrines and other sacred places and monuments were destroyed by Islamist groups. Throughout the conflict, Alawite civilians were executed by anti-government armed groups. In February 2018, the anti-GoS group Ahrar Al-Sham launched mortars on a predominantly Alawite populated neighbourhood of Damascus, which resulted in the death of at least seven civilians. [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.6, p. 83]

In the Kurdish-controlled areas in north-east Syria, sources indicate that Alawites are at risk of being treated as adversaries, based on their political affiliation with the Syrian government rather than their religious affiliation. [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.6, p. 83]

Conclusions and guidance

Do the acts qualify as persecution under Article 9 QD?

Acts reported to be committed against individuals under this profile are of such severe nature that they amount to persecution (e.g. killing, torture).



What is the level of risk of persecution (well-founded fear)?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances such as: regional specifics (presence of anti-government and extremist groups), perceived opposition to the GoS, etc.



Are the reasons for persecution falling within Article 10 QD (nexus)?

Where well-founded fear of persecution could be substantiated, available information indicates that it may be for reasons of (imputed) political opinion. In the case of persecution by extremist groups, it may also be for reasons of religion.

See other topics concerning ethno-religious groups:

- [4.10.1. Sunni Arabs](#)
- [4.10.2. Kurds](#)
- [4.10.3. Druze](#)
- [4.10.4. Alawites](#)
- [4.10.5. Christians](#)
- [4.10.6. Yazidis](#)
- [4.10.7. Palestinians](#)