

UN rights chief demands immediate end to killing of civilians in Syria



This handout picture released by the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) shows Syrians attending the funeral of people killed in clashes the previous day between militants aligned with

Syria's ruling HTS administration and armed opposition groups loyal to former President Bashar al-Assad, on March 7, 2025 .(Photo by AFP)

Geneva, March 10 (RHC)-- The UN Human Rights chief has called for an immediate halt to the ongoing violence in northwestern Syria, where entire families have reportedly been killed in escalating clashes, demanding a prompt investigation into the killings and holding the perpetrators accountable.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk made the remarks in a statement on Sunday, as fierce clashes are continuing between militants aligned with Syria's ruling Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham administration and armed opposition groups loyal to former President Bashar al-Assad in Syria's coastal regions.

"There are reports of summary executions on a sectarian basis by unidentified perpetrators, by members of the caretaker authorities' security forces, as well as by elements associated with the former government," Turk said.

He went on to say that there are "extremely disturbing" reports of entire families being killed, including women, children and hors de combat fighters, stressing that "the killing of civilians in coastal areas in northwest Syria must cease, immediately."

The human rights chief further called for "prompt, transparent and impartial investigations into all the killings and other violations," noting that "those responsible must be held to account, in line with international law norms and standards."

Earlier in the day, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the death toll from the ongoing violence in northwestern Syria has risen to over 1,000 people in two days, including 745 civilians, who were killed mostly execution-style, 125 HTS militants and 148 members of opposition groups.

Clashes erupted in the country's northwestern coastal region on Thursday, which is predominantly inhabited by the Alawite minority sect. Former Syrian President Bashar Assad also comes from the Alawite community.

The attacks come while the HTS administration has sought to assure religious and ethnic minorities that their rights would be upheld.

Syria's de facto leader, Abu Mohammad al-Julani, has called for "peace" and "national unity" following the deadly violence, saying the developments are within "expected challenges."

Meanwhile, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the chief of the World Health Organization (WHO) called the clashes "deeply concerning," saying they are directly impacting people's health, as health facilities and ambulances had been damaged.

"WHO is working to deliver emergency medicines and trauma supplies for the immediate care of the injured," Tedros said in a post on X. "WHO urges all parties to respect and safeguard health services to ensure medical aid reaches those who need it most. Peace is the best medicine," he added.

The HTS militant group seized control of Damascus on December 8, culminating a swift offensive that had begun in Aleppo just two weeks before and ultimately brought an end to Assad's 24-year rule.

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