

Over 1,000 people, mostly civilians, killed in two days of Syria clashes

International Desk

More than 1,000 people, including 745 civilians, were killed in the two days of clashes between Syrian security forces and fighters loyal to the former government and ensuing revenge killings.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based monitor, said 745 civilians were killed mostly execution-style, while 125 Syrian security forces and 148 loyalists to the former government were killed. Death tolls from the two days of fighting have varied wildly, with some estimates putting the final death toll even higher.

Fighting began on Thursday after fighters loyal to the ousted president Bashar al-Assad government ambushed security forces of new rulers in Jableh, in the coastal Latakia Province.

The wide-ranging, coordinated assault was the biggest challenge to the country's new authorities so far, and came three months after opposition fighters led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham militant group toppled the Syrian president.

To crush the rebellion, the new rulers called for re-enforcements, with thousands of fighters converging on Syria's coast from all over the country. Though fighters are nominally under the auspices of the new Syrian government, militias still persist, some of which have been implicated in past human rights abuses and are rela-



Syrian's new authorities' forces are deployed in the town of Qadmus in Syria's Tartus governorate during clashes with opposition fighters on March 7, 2025. SANA

tively undisciplined.

'Expected challenges'

On Sunday, Syria's transitional president, Ahmad al-Sharaa, said the developments were within "expected challenges" and called for national unity.

"We have to preserve national unity and domestic peace, we can live together," he said in a video circulated by Arab media, speaking at a mosque in Damascus.

"Rest assured about Syria, this country has the characteristics for survival ... What is currently happening in Syria is within the expected challenges."

Videos showed the bodies of dozens of people in civilian clothes piled up in the town of Al-Mukhtariya, where more than 40 people were killed at one time, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights. Other videos showed fighters wearing security uniforms executing people point blank, ordering men to bark like dogs and beat captives.

The Syrian coast is heavily populated by the minority

Islamic Alawite sect, from which the deposed Syrian president hailed, though most Alawites were not associated with the Assad government.

Revenge killings

Syria's new authorities promised Alawites that they would be safe under their rule and that there would be no revenge killings. Government security forces' killings of hundreds of mainly Alawite civilians this week, however, have sent waves of fear through the religious minority community.

A man from the town of Snobar, Latakia, detailed how gunmen killed at least 14 of his neighbors who were all from the Arris family, including the execution of a 75-year-old father and his three sons in front of the family's mother.

"After they killed the father and his boys, they asked the mother to take her gold off, or they would kill her," said the man who was close to the family but spoke under the condition of anonymity for his safety. Another resident of Latakia

said that power and water to the area had been cut off for the past day, and that they had been sheltering in their house, scared of the militants on the streets.

'Extremely disturbing'

The United Nations on Sunday said it was receiving "extremely disturbing" reports of entire families being killed in northwestern Syria and called for an immediate halt to the violence.

Iranian officials have warned that insecurity and instability in Syria will only benefit the Israeli regime and would cause terrorist and extremist groups taking advantage of the unstable situation.

Iran's Ambassador to Lebanon Mojtaba Amani said that the Israeli regime benefits from the disintegration of Syria.

Amani also warned that "organized massacre" against different Syrian groups is taking place in the Arab country, which is extremely dangerous and will have its impact in the region, especially Lebanon, in the future.

Iran says nuclear talks possible only if related concerns are to be addressed

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Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations said if the objective of negotiations with Iran is to address concerns about any potential militarization of Iran's nuclear program; such discussions may be subject to consideration.

"However, should the aim be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear program to claim that what Obama (former US president) failed to achieve has now been accomplished, such negotiations will never take place," the mission said in a post on its X account on Sunday.

In recent months, the US President Donald Trump has repeatedly expressed his interest to reach an agreement with Iran on its nuclear program.

However, his language of threats and imposition of sanctions against Iran have made Iranian officials skeptical of negotiations with the US administration.

Trump last month restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran which includes efforts to drive its oil exports down to zero.

Iranian officials have frequently said that negotiations under pressure are not meaningful.

On Saturday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the insistence of some bullying

powers on negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program is aimed at imposing their demands, stressing that the Islamic Republic will not accept their expectations.

"The insistence of some bullying governments on negotiations is not aimed at resolving issues, but rather [aims] to assert and impose their own expectations," he said.

"Definitely, the Islamic Republic will not accept their expectations," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

In 2015, Iran reached a nuclear deal with Britain, Germany, France, the United States, Russia and China, which is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The US quit the agreement in 2018, during Donald Trump's first term as US president, and Iran began moving away from its nuclear-related commitments under the deal.

The US unilateral withdrawal from the agreement and re-imposition of sanctions removed under the deal left the future of the JCPOA in limbo.

However, Iran has been trying to revive the JCPOA during the past years and has held several rounds of talks with the European parties to the deal, which their non-compliance to the agreement had a great impact on the implementation of the agreement.



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The navies of Iran, Russia and China will hold new military drills off the coast of Iran today in a bid to enhance naval cooperation.

The navies of the three countries will kick off joint drills, codenamed "Security Belt 2025", in the northern Indian Ocean with the aim of promoting security in the area and enhancing trilateral naval cooperation.

Vessels from the Iranian Navy and the Naval Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps will take part in the drills that mark the seventh edition of "Security Belt" exercises by Iran, Russia and China, the media office for Iran's military drills said in a report.

Azerbaijan, South Africa, Oman, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka

will attend as observers.

China will deploy "a destroyer and a supply ship," China's Defense Ministry said on the WeChat social media network.

According to the Chinese Defense Ministry, "the aim is to strengthen military mutual trust and foster pragmatic cooperation among the naval forces of the participating countries."

The Iranian Army conducted drills in the same area in February to "strengthen defense capabilities against any threat."

The three countries have held similar exercises in the region in recent years. They have also been involved in joint efforts aimed at countering piracy and maritime terrorism, exchanging information in naval rescue and relief operations as well as sharing operational and tactical experience.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran raps Canada's new sanctions as breach of international law

The Iranian Foreign Ministry strongly denounced the latest round of Canadian sanctions against the Islamic Republic, characterizing them as "deceitful" and "in violation of international law."

In a statement on Sunday, Assistant to Foreign Minister and Director General for the Americas Department at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Issa Kameli, said the move is unlawful, illegitimate, and a violation of the human rights of the Iranian people, making the Canadian government internationally accountable, Press TV reported.

"The new sanctions imposed by Canada against Iran under the pretext of human rights are a political and deceitful move that contradicts the principles of the United Nations Charter and international laws governing free trade between countries," the statement read.

Canada announced on Friday fresh anti-Iran sanctions targeting seven individuals and entities over their alleged links to networks involved in the production of weapons, which Ottawa claims to have been sent to Russia for use in the Ukraine war.

The Canadian government also justified the sanctions by citing Iran's purported role in "gross human rights violations" and destabilizing activities.



Issa Kameli

The Canadian Foreign Ministry said the new sanctions align with measures taken by Canada's allies, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union.

Kameli pointed out that Canada itself is among the major violators of human rights, including through its complicity and deliberate participation in the genocide of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. He called upon Canada to take responsibility for its complicity in Israel's genocide and war crimes against the Palestinian people, as well as other human rights abuses. Responding to repeated accusations regarding Iran's alleged involvement in the Ukraine conflict,

the senior diplomat vehemently denied these claims and emphasized that "repeating a lie does not make it true."

He reiterated Iran's position of non-involvement in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis, underscoring the country's opposition to war and advocating for diplomatic negotiations as the means to resolve disputes between warring parties. The diplomat further advised Canadian officials to focus on addressing their own domestic and international shortcomings, particularly the systemic policy of the colonial extermination of indigenous populations, rather than leveling baseless accusations against others.