

# Christians In Syria: From Killed Armenian Priest in Syria to the Roots of Hatred and Genocide

FSA history in Syria and sectarianism

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

*Father Hovsep Bedoyan, the head of the [Armenian Catholic community in Qamishli](#), and the priest's father, [Abraham Bedoyan](#), were killed November 11, on the road leading from Qamishli to Deir Ez Zor, where they were headed to check on the rebuilding of the [Forty Martyr's Armenian Apostolic Church](#) in Deir Ezzor, which was destroyed in 2014 by terrorists who targeted Christians and churches. [Deacon Fati Sano](#) of the Al-Hasakeh church was injured in the attack when the car was ambushed at a checkpoint by masked gunmen on [motorcycles](#), which shot at point-blank range. The car they drove was inscribed with the [Armenian Church's](#) logo. The same day, a series of [bomb blasts](#) in Qamishli occurred, targeting the Armenian Catholic church, an Assyrian Christian-owned business, and a Catholic school, [killing at least 6 people](#) and wounded 22 others. More than [100,000](#) ethnic Armenians lived in Syria, mainly in the province of Aleppo prior to 2011; however, after the constant targeting of Christians by the [Free Syrian Army](#) (FSA) beginning in 2011, thousands have fled and many hundreds went to Armenia, who offered the Syrians a visa, when most of the world had shut its doors to them.*

Tens of thousands of Christians from the [Assyrian](#) minority fled attacks in 2015, and have not returned. Christians in Homs were targeted very early in 2011 by the [FSA](#), with churches attacked, burned and priests killed. Christians in Damascus were dodging missiles fired into Bab Touma from terrorists, in East Ghouta, until the Syrian Arab Army defeated them and they could walk again safely on the "street called straight", from Bible passages about Saint Paul. In September 2012, the large Christian neighborhood in Aleppo, Azizia, fought the FSA, with Christian civilians holding arms to defend their homes and churches. [George](#), an Armenian Christian of Aleppo said, "The Armenians are fighting because they believe the FSA are sent by their Turkish oppressors to attack them, the Christians want to defend their neighborhoods." "[FSA snipers](#) were on the rooftops and they were attacking the Maronite church and Armenian residents there," said a former clergyman calling himself John. A [Syrian Armenian mother](#) said, "They are shouting 'the Alawites to the graves and the Christians to Beirut.'"

While many Syrian Christians have resisted leaving Syria, for the life of a refugee abroad, many have gone even though they were living in safe areas, such as the coast. They saw their Christian countrymen leaving in large numbers, and they feared that the [FSA](#) terrorists that the Obama administration was supporting would win, and in that case, they could never live safely in Syria.

Father Hovsep Bedoyan had been visiting [Deir Ez Zor](#) every 2 weeks while overseeing the rebuilding of the church there. The France-based association, [L'Oeuvre d'Orient](#), is a Catholic charity aimed at reconstructing infrastructure for the return of the Christian community. [Monseigneur Pascal Gollnisch](#), the group's head, pointed at Turkey's recent invasion of Northern Syria: "It is the responsibility of all occupying forces to protect the safety of the local Christian minority," he insisted.

The United Nations (UN) estimates that almost [200,000 people](#) have been displaced by the Turkish invasion, dubbed "[Operation Peace Spring](#)", while eyewitness accounts of summary executions, beatings, and torture, unlawful detention, and kidnappings by the Turkish military and the FSA, who are Radical Islamic terrorists, employed as mercenaries.

The FSA is the Turkish backed terrorists/mercenaries

"It was sadly learned that a cleric from the Syrian Armenian community was killed in a vicious attack in the area under the control of the terrorist organization PYD/YPG/PKK," the [Turkish Foreign Ministry](#) said in a written statement, which deflected responsibility, and blamed the Syrian Kurds who had been allied to the US, and denying their own FSA mercenaries were the actual killers. ISIS has claimed responsibility for the killings, but the FSA and ISIS are allies, and sources close to the events on the ground have said it was the [FSA](#) who killed them, and ISIS only issued the claim of responsibility to shield the blame from the FSA.

FSA history in Syria and sectarianism

The [FSA](#) and its political wing, the SNC, have never been secular or moderate. The founding members of the SNC and FSA were members of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#). Their goal for Syria has always been to establish an [Islamic government](#), thus abolishing the secular Ba'ath Party as well as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP).

"The Free Syrian Army practically doesn't exist," [Kamal Sido](#), a Mideast expert at the human rights group Society for Threatened Peoples (GfbV) told Germany's Deutschlandfunk broadcaster. "The Free Syrian Army is a smokescreen hiding various names, and if you look at the names, at these groups' videos, you'll find they are radical Islamist, Jihadist groups."

The [FSA](#) was not only fighting the Syrian government but were also killing, raping, maiming and kidnapping unarmed [Syrian civilians](#), most of whom were Sunni Muslims, like themselves. On July 20, 2017, President Trump [cut the CIA's covert program](#) to equip and train the FSA. The CIA program began in [2013 by Obama to overthrow President Assad](#); however, CIA officials observed that many FSA had joined ISIS and other radical groups, and feared the weapons they gave the group might end up with ISIS.

The Marmarita massacre

On August 17, 2013, in Marmarita, Amin Nakour, Maya Barshini, Atalla Aboud, and Ibrahim Saadi were attending a [Christian celebration](#) to honor the annual commemoration of "Mother Mary's Day". The small village of Marmarita sits in the historic "Valley of the Christians" which is near Homs. It was a hot August night, and Christian party-goers were suddenly attacked the FSA and their allies. The four were killed when they attempted to flee the party in a car. The [FSA](#) and their allies, have vowed to make Syria a Sunni Muslim State, and have targeted Christians and minorities for 8 years.

## The invasion, occupation, and destruction of Kessab

On March 21, 2014, [Kessab was attacked](#) when shelling from the Turkish side of the border rained down on the undefended Armenian village, sending its [2,000 residents](#) into panic. Over [20,000 fanatics from the FSA](#) and its allies came pouring over the border. They desecrated all [3 churches](#), and looted the village's graves, before scattering the bones of the deceased around the town. The FSA held 26 elderly Armenians against their will for forty days in Turkey, where the [FSA](#) kidnappers brought the [US Ambassador](#) to Turkey, Francis J. Riccardone, Jr., to visit the elderly captives, but offered no help or release. [Samuel Poladian](#), who stayed in Kessab for the 3-month occupation, and claims he heard Turkish military helicopters overhead on the morning of the invasion, and that Turkey assisted in the invasion.

[Monseigneur Ayvazian](#) said, "They burned all my books and documents, many of them very old, and left my library with nothing but 60cm of ash on the floor." He has a photo of the church altar, which was desecrated by the FSA before the Syrian Arab Army liberated Kessab on June 15, 2014. The Armenians claim the Kessab attack, which was directed solely against Armenian Christians, was Turkey's brutal way of showing the Armenians and the Syrian government that they can attack at any time.

## Armenian Church in Deir Ez Zor destroyed

On November 10, 2014, terrorists [blew up the Armenian Church in Deir el-Zour](#), which is dedicated to the 1.5 million Armenians slaughtered by the Turks during the 1915 genocide, where many hundreds of thousands of victims died in death camps around Deir el-Zour. Because the [FSA](#) has received arms from Turkey, the destruction of the church is regarded by Armenians as crimes carried out by Turks, harkening back to the genocide. "During the Armenian genocide, the Turks entered the church and killed its priest, Father Petrus Terzibashian, in front of the congregation," [Monseigneur Ayvazian](#) said, adding "Then they threw his body into the Euphrates. This time when the Islamists came, our priest there fled for his life."

## The Turkish hatred of Armenians

The 19th century [Armenian Surp Asdvadzadzin Church](#) in Gurun district of Sivas (Sebastia), Turkey, will reopen as a museum. At different times the church has been used as a prison, movie theater, storeroom, and wedding hall. The local mayor hopes it will boost the development of tourism in the region. That is the stark reality in Turkey, where Muslims account for 98% of the population, compared to the large Christian minority in Syria. In Turkey, they have tried to erase their Christian history, and have used the old Armenian churches as museums, or locked up or ruined.

## The Armenian Genocide, Turkish denial, the US House recognition

The [Armenian Genocide](#) was the systematic mass extermination and expulsion of 1.5 million ethnic Armenians within the Ottoman Empire, from approximately 1914 to 1923. Other ethnic groups were similarly targeted for extermination; such as Assyrians and the Greeks, also strictly Christians. Mass executions were followed by the deportation of women, children, the elderly, and the infirm on death marches leading to Deir Ez Zor, which were driven forward by military escorts, as the deportees were deprived of food and water and subjected to periodic robbery, rape, and massacre.

On Oct. 29, 2019, the [US House voted](#) overwhelmingly to formally recognize the Armenian genocide and denounce it. Lawmakers had previously failed from supporting such a resolution to preserve the United States' relationship with Turkey, a NATO ally that has steadfastly denied that the atrocities amounted to genocide. Livid at Turkey's recent bloody military invasion in Syria, lawmakers saw a possible tie to the Armenian genocide, as many feared the withdrawal of American forces would lead to ethnic cleansing in northeast Syria.

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