

Maaloula, Syria - People Who Speak the Language of Jesus Christ Under Siege Again

Since the Turkish-Takfiri coup in Syria backed by the US, Israel, Qatar and the West, Christians are, again, under threat.

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Maaloula is synonymous with martyrdom and miracles. Scaling the cliffs that tightly contain it, Maaloula's sacred and secular architectural wonders rise several stories, usually wearing a wash of blue distemper. Were it not for the vineyards and olive and apricot orchards that carpet the surrounding valley, a casual visitor might ponder how the townspeople have survived the mountains' sun-dried, barren landscape for millennia. —[Mitchell Prothero](#), 2008



Maaloula is a Christian town some 50km from Damascus in the north-eastern Damascus countryside, overshadowed by the Qalamoun mountains.

Residents of Maaloula still teach and speak the same dialect spoken by Jesus of Nazareth – **the ancient language of Aramaic originated more than 900 years before Christ and was widely used throughout the Middle East from B.C. 1200 to A.D. 700.**

The Syrian government under President Assad established a new Aramaic Language Institute in Maaloula to preserve the Aramaic language that was gradually dying out in the region. This is from a Guardian article in [2009](#):

In Syria there are a lot of minority groups: Circassians, Armenians, Kurds and Assyrians, so it's a big decision to allow the teaching of other languages in government schools – But the government is interested in promoting the Aramaic language because it goes back so deep into Syria's history.

Maaloula sits at the head of a fertile valley. Farming is the main local industry, and the village is known for the quality of its produce. It is also known globally for the unique celebration of the Feast of the Holy Cross that has been celebrated here for centuries. The feast commemorates the finding of the 'true Cross' in Jerusalem in the fourth century, by Empress Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine. Tradition states that she ordered fires to be lit on high mountains across the region, to announce the discovery. The night before the celebration on 14 September, bonfires are lit on the summit of both mountains north and south of the town to mark the start of the feast.

Maaloula is home to several of Christianity's oldest holy sites, including the Melkite Greek Catholic Monastery of St. Sergius and the Antiochene Orthodox Convent of St. Thecla.

Built in the early fourth century on the remains of a pagan temple, St. Sergius looms over the town from a high hilltop. Staffed by the Basilian Salvatorian Fathers, the monastery commemorates two Roman soldiers, Sergius and Bacchus, whom the Roman Emperor Maximian exiled to Syria for their Christian beliefs. Resolute in their faith, they were executed (around 303) and buried in Syria. Devotion to Sergius and Bacchus, particularly among officers and soldiers, spread rapidly throughout the empire after Constantine the Great's edict of religious toleration in 313.



Prothero [wrote](#):

Near a gap in the mountain, at the bottom of the ridge, stands a 10th-century convent containing a shrine built around a cave honoring Christianity's first female martyr — St. Thecla, a disciple of the Apostle Paul and considered by the Christian East as "equal to the apostles and protomartyr."

According to the apocryphal "Acts of Paul and Thecla," a second-century text of Coptic origin, the young virgin of noble lineage found the cave as she fled soldiers intent on executing her after denying the advances of a nobleman from nearby Pisidian Antioch. Reaching the side of the mountain, Thecla implored the Lord to save her and the ridge opened, revealing her cavernous refuge. From this story originates the town's name. In Aramaic, Maaloula means "gate" or "entrance."

Watch [Journeyman Pictures](#) - The Village in Syria where they speak Jesus' tongue.

The First Al Qaeda Invasion of Maaloula 2013

What follows is a report from BBC's Jeremy Bowen, full of the usual inserts of misleading narratives - "rebels" "Iran and Russia arming the Syrian Arab Army" **while he witnesses the Al Qaeda invasion of Maaloula and does not report on the atrocities committed during their reign of terror.**

Myself and independent journalist **Eva Bartlett** would later report on the crimes committed by the so called "rebels" against unarmed Christian civilians. In 2016 [Bartlett wrote](#):

On September 4, 2013, a Jordanian suicide-bomber exploded his [truck](#) at the Syrian

army checkpoint at the arched gate outside the village. This was immediately followed by attacks on Syrian soldiers nearby, mainly by al-Nusra (al-Qaeda in Syria) and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) terrorists—including Chechens, Uighurs, Turkestanis, Libyans, and Saudis, as well as locals.

Locals [believe](#) that Muslim families and neighbours of the Christian residents had given drugged food to the Syrian Arab Army soldiers at the checkpoint so they were impervious to the warnings and alarms given by the residents when they saw the terrorist truck-bomb driving towards the entrance gate.

According to [locals](#) - the fighters included people from the Free Syrian Army, the Al Farouq Brigades, Ahfad al Rasul, Jabhat al Nusra, Jaish al Islam, Ahrar al Sham, Jabhat Islammiya, Palestinian Hamas fighters (Jabhat Tahreer al-Qalamoun), and Jabhat al Ruhr Qalomoun. Amongst them were fighters from Libya, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Uyghur Turkic Chinese as well as Syrians.



Safir Hotel - Photo: Vanessa Beeley

The militants first occupied the northern lands of Maaloula (near Qalamoun) in December 2012. On 8 February 2013, they occupied the popular and spectacularly located Safir Hotel overlooking the town, making it their headquarters.

On September 7, 2013, terrorists point-blank assassinated three unarmed Maaloula men after they refused to convert to Islam, critically injuring one of the men's sisters. I was later told that the men were executed one by one, forced to watch as

their friends were killed in front of them for refusing to convert to Islam.

Bartlett writes:

Antoinette recounted how lying bleeding inside the house, she heard her brother, brother-in-law, and nephew being murdered.

“The terrorists told Anton to say the *Shahada*. Anton told them ‘I was born Christian and I will die Christian.’,” Antoinette recalled. Mikhael and Sarkis were likewise ordered to convert to Islam, and likewise refusing, were assassinated.

A few days later, on 7th of September, six young men were kidnapped. What is particularly difficult for the Christian community in Maaloula to forgive is the fact that, “four of the six young men were kidnapped by their Sunni neighbours who were working with the terrorists and then they were executed by the Maaloula Muslim Leader Emad Diab and his local gang.” Their bodies were finally discovered in 2016. I attended their funeral in Damascus:



On 2 December 2013, Jabhat-al-Nusra kidnapped 13 Greek Orthodox Nuns from the Convent of St. Thecla. They were held for three months in various locations, finally ending up in Yabroud, before negotiations involving the Qatari, Lebanese and Syrian governments resulted in their release on 9 March 2014, in exchange for 150 women detained in prisons in Syria. ([Hart UK](#))



View from the mountain of Maaloula. Photo: Vanessa Beeley

The terrorists proceeded to take up positions in the hotel and mountainous ridges that overshadowed Maaloula and they were able to snipe residents as they came into the open to collect water or food. Icons were burned and destroyed, including the statue of the Virgin Mary that had always overlooked the town. The terrorist factions would fill tyres with flammable material and roll them down onto the roofs of civilian homes below them.

AP Report from [2016](#) - Inside Maaloula, ravaged by “militants”

Liberation finally came on April 14th 2014. A year later, a new statue of the Virgin Mary was placed on one of the rocky pinnacles overlooking the town to replace the one that had been destroyed by the Islamist fighters. In Maaloula the scars remain, a testament to the ravages of Western and Zionist-backed sectarian insurgents that again, threaten the town today after the 2024 terrorist coup that finally plunged Syria into the darkest age it has yet faced.

Maaloula 2024 - Under Attack Again by Takfiri Elements

On New Year’s Eve 2024 reports were circulating on social media that internet services have been cut to Maaloula and no communications were being received from the remaining residents of Maaloula. Members of the Christian community are known to have fled to Damascus just as they were forced to do in 2013. Terrorist factions mocked them as they fled.

The Syrian Arab Army has been replaced by HTS-affiliated factions led by members of the [Diab family](#) who were banished from Maaloula in 2014 (by President Assad). The terror of

2013/14 is returning to Maaloula bereft of any legitimate military protection and facing revenge-fueled gangs intent on finishing what they failed to do in 2013 – ethnically cleansing Maaloula of its Christian inhabitants. These factions entered Maaloula [chanting](#):

We will make you taste what we have tasted for 14 years.

The Catholic news agency [ACI MENA](#) confirmed the following:

- Mass displacement of Christians from Maaloula under threat of death if they remain
- Seizure of businesses and property
- Return of exiled militants and accomplices involved in the murder and kidnappings of Christians in 2013/14
- Turkish Takfiri gang is in charge of Maaloula “Sultan Suleyman Shah Brigade”
- Attempted break-in and burglary by armed militia at the farm of a father and son. One of the armed men died during clashes. The Christian farmer handed himself over to the local priest who transferred him to the HTS authorities in Damascus.


The death of an armed insurgent led to the humiliation of Maaloula’s Christians, forced to the funeral of the dead militant killed in self-defence by a peaceful Christian farmer whose family and relatives were forcibly expelled from their homes by the armed thugs.

Since the initial post-coup invasion of Maaloula by the Turkish and Diab-led factions, HTS has allegedly deployed their “General Security” forces to the town but only after the flight of multiple families under threat of revenge executions and kidnappings.



OstensibleOyster 

@Ostensiblax

 Maaloula: HTS 'General Security' policing units have deployed throughout the village.



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While HTS led by Al Qaeda/ISIS-origin Jolani have publicly endorsed Christmas celebrations and decorations, the tree in Maaloula remains undecorated and bare. The tree in the Christian town of Al Sqeilbiyyeh, northern Hama, was set ablaze by the occupation armed gangs.

The US went public with a [muted condemnation](#) of revenge attacks on “regime remnants” – a blanket term to justify the extra-judicial execution or abduction of more than 400 individuals since the Turkey-Israel-US-Qatar-backed coup in Syria. It is suspected that many more have disappeared and will have been liquidated.

Jolani, clearly being managed by MI6 rebrand agents, called a meeting with Christian faith leaders providing an antidotal photo op for his western media henchmen:



Almost simultaneously the Orthodox Times issued a report - Christian leaders in Syria issue a joint statement of hope and reconciliation amid transition.

At this historic moment, as Syria is undergoing a new transition, we, the heads of the Christian Churches in Syria, address the public with a message of love and hope.

The leaders refer to the new constitution - Jolani has indicated that constitutional reform will take [three years](#) and no elections will be held for four years - contrary to the concept of the HTS regime being transitional while Jolani appoints foreign mercenaries to military command positions and "redeemed" terrorists to regime power slots.

The necessity for the constitution-drafting process to be inclusive and comprehensive, involving all components of Syrian society, including various ethnicities, denominations, men and women, young and old, to ensure the constitution represents the will of the people in all its diversity.

The full statement can be [read here](#).



I asked former Ambassador to Syria (2003 – 2006) Peter Ford and Arab Lebanese journalist Myriam Charbaty to comment on the statement in the light of the recent threats to Maaloula by the Turkish armed factions. You can listen to my previous conversation with Charbaty [here](#).

Peter Ford:

The statement by the Patriarchs arouses deep suspicion. Is it really authentic? I have no doubt the Patriarchs gave their possibly coerced approval, but did they really author a statement in perfect English which reads more like it was drafted in Langley, Virginia than Damascus. Syria? No woke button is left untouched, even “hate speech” is referenced!.

The other tell-tale sign of the statement having been drafted by other hands is the prominence given to the call for lifting of sanctions. Would Christian leaders solicitous for their flock really call for the immediate surrender of the main lever Western powers have to ensure good behaviour towards Christians and others by the new jihadi regime?

Why would the US want to engineer this statement, which can only help to launder the terrorists’ image and make them internationally respectable? Because the US Deep State has every interest in grooming its protege Jolani into becoming a domestically and internationally accepted US client and asset respectable with complete command over that rump part of Syria the US/Israeli masters choose to allocate him from the carcass of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The statement reads especially oddly at a moment when the Christians’ oppressors are particularly active in the Christian stronghold of Maaloula. No word about this? Not even an oblique reference to this and other tribulations being suffered by the Christians of Syria? Only “reconciliation” with the oppressors?

Another curious omission is the signature of any dignitary representing Syria’s large

Maronite community. Might this be because the Maronite head resides in Lebanon, making it more difficult to pressure him?

In my analysis the Patriarch's text is a hostage statement which it would be a charity towards its signatories to discount. Alternatively it is a sad case of Stockholm Syndrome, where kidnappees come to embrace the cause of their kidnappers.

Myriam Charbaty:

With all due respect, the statement issued by the patriarchs in Syria falls significantly short of addressing the grave challenges faced by the Christian community and the Syrian people as a whole, particularly amidst the rise of Takfiri ideology in its various forms.

While the statement may have been made in good faith, it reflects a limited understanding of the broader regional dynamics. The West continues to tighten its grip on the region, further fragmenting the already divided Sykes-Picot entities—entities that, if united, could form a strong and liberation-capable Arab world.

Amid persistent Western efforts to destabilize the Axis of Resistance and dismantle Arab identity, the patriarchs' statement fails to confront the existential threats posed to the Syrian people. Takfiris are waging a brutal campaign of beheadings, torture, and killings, targeting anyone who defends Syria's historic position as a pro-Resistance, anti-Israel, independent Arab state that embraces all sects and ethnic groups under a unified and collective Arab identity.

As places like Maaloula, Wadi al-Nasara, and Souqailabiyeh face open threats and attacks, Christians and other Syrians have repeatedly called on their Christian leadership to empower them to defend their presence and existence. They have asked to be armed against forces like Abu Mohammad al-Jolani and his Takfiri militia, made up of mercenaries from across the globe.

Instead, under the biblical slogan, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9), the church leadership appears to advocate pacifism in the face of imminent violence and atrocities. However, the Bible—and Jesus Christ himself—does not call for passivity in the face of injustice. Rather, it calls on us to stand for justice, even at great cost, for only through justice can true peace be achieved. Peace cannot coexist with oppression or subjugation; it must be rooted in liberation.

As Father Gustavo Gutiérrez once wrote, "The denunciation of injustice implies the rejection of the use of Christianity to legitimize the established order." This sentiment is one we must urgently echo today.

While the patriarchs' diplomatic tone may aim to preserve lives, the reality is that the threats we face are existential. What is required now is not mere rhetoric but a firm and active stance of Resistance.

We are confronted with the expansionist ambitions of the Israeli enemy, orchestrated and backed by the United States.

Our people are being killed and displaced, and Syria's rich history—our shared Arab identity and social fabric—is being systematically erased, both from museums and from

collective memory.

Regrettably, the only viable path left is one of Popular Armed Resistance. Freedom will not be granted; it must be seized through strength and resolve. Maaloula, Wadi al-Nasara, and Souqailabiyeh have learned that well the first time around and this time it must not be any different. Our existence on this land requires sacrifice and that, by Christ's commandment, is the greatest form of love.

Let it be clear: the conflict in Syria is not a civil war. It is a battle against foreign mercenaries and internal collaborators advancing Western, U.S.-led agendas designed to fragment and dominate our region.

As Myriam later explained to me – Christians are no threat to Takfiris, not like the Alawite, Shia and Sunni communities that oppose foreign-backed Takfirism. The forced exodus of Christians from the region are part of the demographic rearrangement of the Middle East. The removal of Christians leaves the field open to the orchestrated Muslim-centric sectarian wars that serve the Zionist and Western agendas.

While Christians are being “quietly” persecuted, the West can continue a policy of [cosmetic defence](#) of the Christians in the region. The drive to conceal the dark agenda and to present life as “normal” in the multi-denominational Christian towns in Syria is designed to prevent any localised resistance until the time that everyone will be displaced or massacred. As Charbaty said:

HTS does not have the numbers to consolidate power in full confrontation with all sects in Syria. It needs to divide and conquer.

Charbaty also added:

These institutions lack the courage to defend *our* existence. In their desire for a quiet life, they have abandoned righteousness, truth, and solidarity with their brothers in the coastal regions of Syria and beyond. Seeking only to preserve their human form of existence, they have turned away from justice and the noble sacrifices required to uphold it.

They have lowered their heads so that they do not get mistaken for a threat. A move which, in time will prove, was a cheap surrender under the veil of self-preservation.

As Syria begins 2025 in darkness and bloodshed the glimmers of a Resistance against these agendas is beginning to emerge from the initial turmoil, confusion and fear, grounded in love for community, faith and justice. The new Crusader paradigm will not conquer such resistance.

As Malcolm X said:

When the people who are in power want to [...] create an image, to justify something that's bad, they use the press. And they'll use the press to create a humanitarian image, for a devil, or a devil image for a humanitarian. They'll take a person who's a victim of the crime, and make it appear he's the criminal, and they'll take the criminal and make it appear that he's the victim of the crime.

Stay vigilant and don't abandon Syria.

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