

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002750/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Yannis Maniatis (S&D)
(6 July 2025)

Subject: Terrorist attack on the Church of the Prophet Elias in Damascus

On Sunday 22 June 2025, a terrorist attack on the Greek Orthodox Church of the Prophet Elias in Damascus left 22 worshippers dead and many more injured. The jihadist past of Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria's president for the transitional period, as well as his previous relations with Al-Qaeda and ISIS remain a source of concern. This attack is not the first on Christian populations in Syria since the regime was overthrown last December.

Given that Syria has historically consisted of a mosaic of religious and ethnic communities, and bearing in mind that on 28 May 2025 the European Union lifted sanctions on Syria, but without this decision being — and nor can it be — considered as a 'blank cheque' for the new regime, will the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy say:

1. How does she ensure that the conditions set out, such as respect for international law and the protection of Syria's religious and ethnic minorities, are complied with?
2. Has the European Union raised the issue of the new Syrian regime's protection of ethnic and religious minorities? If so, in what manner?
3. What action will she take should it become apparent that the Syrian regime does not effectively protect ethnic and religious minorities?

Submitted: 6.7.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(18 August 2025)

The EU strongly condemned the terrorist attack perpetrated against Mar Elias church in Damascus, which claimed a large number of victims ⁽¹⁾.

This is a grave reminder of the need to intensify efforts against the terrorist threat and to ensure the enduring defeat of Daesh and other terrorist groups, which continue to pose a threat to Syria, the region and Europe.

The terrorist attack against Mar Elias church is an attack against all Syrians. The EU stands in solidarity with the Syrian people and supports all efforts by the transitional authorities aimed at ensuring the security of all Syrians with no discrimination.

The EU continues to call for an immediate end to violence across Syria and for all those responsible for serious crimes to be held accountable and brought to justice. In May ⁽²⁾ and June ⁽³⁾ 2025, the EU also introduced sanctions against human rights violators and those fuelling instability in Syria.

Such violent episodes underline the importance of an inclusive transition and the need for state institutions to fulfil their responsibility in maintaining order and protecting the population throughout Syria.

The EU welcomed the transitional authorities' commitment to build a new Syria based on national reconciliation, rule of law, separation of powers, as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms for all Syrians.

The holding of a National Dialogue Conference, the adoption of a Constitutional Declaration, and the appointment of a transitional government were first steps in this long process, but the EU will continue to call for the full, equal and meaningful participation of all Syrians in all spheres of political life and society, and will continue to monitor closely developments on the ground.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/syria-statement-spokesperson-terrorist-attack-mar-elias-church-damascus_en.

⁽²⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202501110.

⁽³⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202501255.