

Religious Freedom in Syria's Post-Assad Transition

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Articles & Testimony

An in-depth look at the legal regime that Syria's transitional authorities have put in place to deal with religious minorities, focusing on how its policies have played out in a climate of ongoing violence and public distrust.

Thank you to Commissioners Soloveichik and Schneck as well as members of the commission for inviting me to testify today on religious freedom in Syria's post-Assad transition. Discussing these issues is complicated by the fact that religious freedom in the new Syria is not a black or white issue. It also comes in the context of a country that is attempting to exit fourteen years of civil war. Nor does it help that the prior regime was sectarian in nature and focused much of its political suppression against the majority Sunni Arab population. Therefore, certain actions that some perceive as sectarian could also be seen by those in power now as political in nature because they are arresting former regime officials involved in war crimes during the Syrian civil war. That being said, there have also been actual crimes over the past eleven-plus months. Therefore, distinguishing between these dynamics is important for determining the true scope of the issue in the new Syrian environment. To better understand these dynamics, this testimony will first explore the legal regime put in place by the transitional authorities related to religious freedom, then explore how this has played out in practice, and conclude with some brief policy recommendations...

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