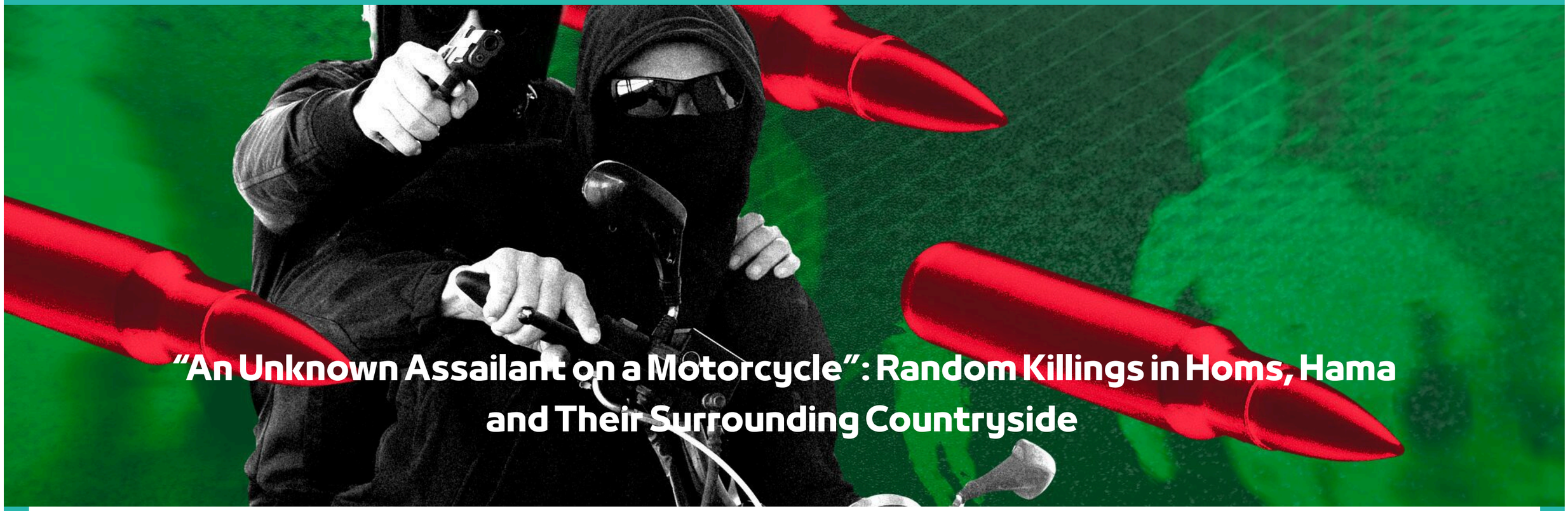
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"An Unknown Assailant on a Motorcycle": Random Killings in Homs, Hama and Their Surrounding Countryside

In collaboration with Daraj, Zein al-Ahmad analyzed the killings documented by Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) in the governorates of Homs and Hama, including their rural areas. We cross-referenced these findings with testimonies from survivors and victims' relatives, medical reports, and material published by the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) and Syrian Al-Ikhbariya, as well as on the official Telegram channels of the Ministries of Interior and Justice and Syrian Al-Ikhbariya. We also compared

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our findings with the monitoring conducted by the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC), which has documented at least 83 incidents of violence and 102 killings in Homs since May 2025.

May 2025. The road was deserted except for a motorcycle. Sumayya (a pseudonym), her mother, and her sister were crossing the road on their way to a routine family visit in Homs when the motorcycle suddenly intercepted them. Two armed men were riding it, one of them masked. One of the men asked the mother where they were going. She answered. He replied: "You will go, but you will not return."

The mother pleaded with him to kill her and let her daughters pass. He ignored her pleas. He shot her dead with a bullet to the neck. In the blink of an eye, he turned his rifle towards her eldest daughter and fired another shot that lodged in her head. He then shot the second daughter, the bullet piercing her back and exiting through her leg.

The wounded sister fell into the lap of her sister, who had just been shot in the head. One of the gunmen prodded the latter to make sure she was dead. She moved. He aimed his rifle at her head again. At that moment, the wounded sister, who had not yet lost consciousness, quickly grabbed the barrel of the rifle with her bare hand.

The bullet tore through the palm of her left hand.

This incident was no exception. Between January 2025 and August 2026, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) documented 55 incidents of killing in Homs, Hama, and their surrounding countryside, resulting in 89 confirmed deaths.

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The organization classified each occurrence as an "incident" based on a specific time and location and the availability of at least one primary source documenting it. A "civilian" was defined as any person whose affiliation with an armed group or possession of a weapon at the time of their killing had not been established by the sources. Nevertheless, the figures of 55 incidents and 89 victims reflect only what the organization documented, rather than an exhaustive count of the actual killings in Homs and Hama.

According to the organization, the victims in six incidents belonged to the Ismaili and Murshidi communities, while at least 50 victims belonged to the Alawite community.

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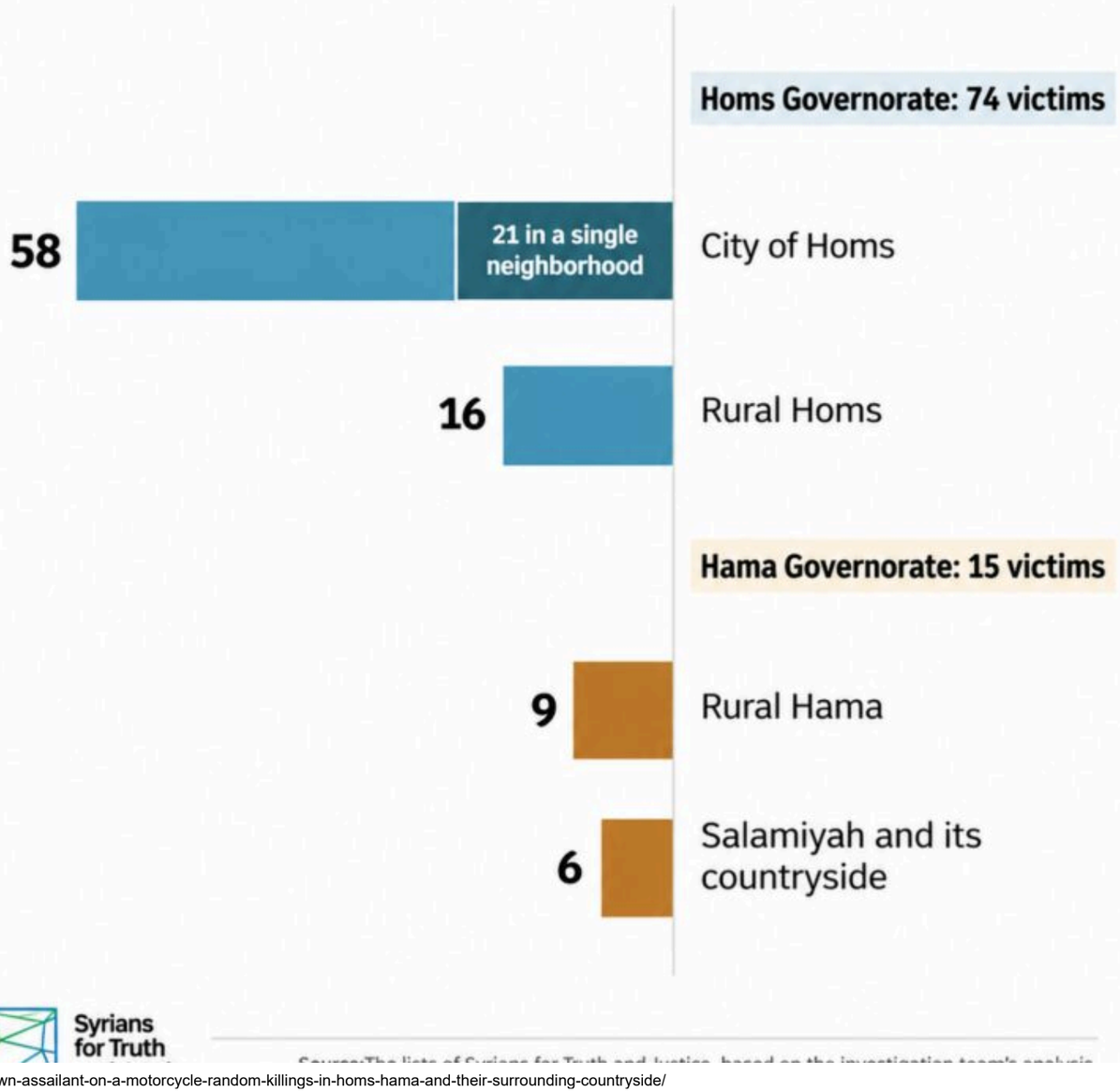
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البريد الالكتروني

الاشتراك

58 of 89 Killings Occurred Within the City of Homs

The victims were killed by armed groups in Homs and Hama, as documented by Syrians for Truth and Justice, between **January 5, 2025**, and **August 4, 2026**, according to the location of the incident.





At Daraj, we analyzed the incidents documented by Syrians for Truth and Justice, cross-referencing them with testimonies from survivors and victims’ relatives, medical reports, and coverage of killings in the two governorates during the same period by the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) and Al-Ikhbariya Syria, as well as publications on the Telegram channels of the Ministries of Interior and Justice and Al-Ikhbariya Syria. We also compared our findings with those of the Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC), which documented at least 83 incidents of violence and 102 killings in Homs since May 2025. This report draws on these sources in an attempt to trace the course of legal proceedings and the fates of victims of random killings.

“You Are the One Who Shot Us”

Sumayya and her sister arrived at the hospital with the help of General Security personnel. Their mother had died instantly. Her sister, who had sustained injuries to her back and leg, was taken into surgery. Sumayya, meanwhile, spent days enduring the pain of a bullet lodged in her head without any surgical intervention.

An investigator later arrived and took her statement. She was asked to authenticate it with her fingerprint but could not read it due to her medical condition. She does not know whether anything was added to or omitted from her testimony, although she describes her treatment by the security forces as positive.

About two hours later, security forces returned to the hospital accompanied by two men whom Sumayya identified as the gunmen who had shot her family. They were wearing the same clothes she had described to the investigator. She told one of them: “You are the one who shot me, my mother and my sister.” The man denied the accusation: “Don’t wrong me.”

The security forces took the two gunmen away, and the family received no further official information about the progress of the case.

But the arrest of the two men was not the end of the story for the family. After Sumayya identified one of them at the hospital, information about the case stopped reaching her. She did not know whether the suspects had been questioned, whether they had been referred to the judiciary, or what ultimately became of the case. She says, however, that the family left Homs out of fear that the gunmen would be released from prison and finish what they had started. She later received word that they had indeed been released.

This gap is evident in other cases documented in Homs by the Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC). The Center said that witnesses reported the authorities’ failure to conduct serious and effective investigations in many cases, and that perpetrators of violence often faced little risk of being held accountable. It also documented the continuation of attacks by unidentified assailants throughout the transitional period.

Al-Jayyid, Rural Hama

Approximately 100 kilometers from the site of the previous incident, on June 23, 2026, in the village of Al-Jayyid in the Al-Ghab Plain in rural Hama, surveillance camera footage circulated on social media shows a road intersection in broad daylight.

The footage captures three men standing near a black van, one repeatedly shouting, “Dad, get inside!” General Security vehicles are seen nearby, while an older woman dressed in summer clothes stands in the open.

The footage captures motorcycles passing through the intersection, a brief altercation, and an armed attack targeting the woman, leaving several people injured.

Gunfire continues amid screams and wailing from a nearby house, as calls for an ambulance can be heard. A wounded young man is seen writhing on the ground. The footage also captures the delayed arrival of General Security personnel before cutting off amid the chaos.

A woman was killed, and three others were injured. According to news reports, the incident stemmed from a family dispute over the harvest season. According to Al-Ikhbariya Syria, the Internal Security Directorate in the Al-Ghab region arrested two individuals who, it said, had "opened fire indiscriminately during an altercation" stemming from a dispute over the harvesting of agricultural land.

The Al-Jayyid incident occurred within the geographical area covered by data compiled by Syrians for Truth and Justice in Hama governorate and its countryside, including Salamiyah and the Al-Ghab Plain. Between January 2025 and August 2026, the organization documented 15 victims across the governorate in a series of incidents ranging from armed attacks and the targeting of civilians at their workplaces or while traveling to assassinations involving motorcycles and ambushes, as documented in the Al-Ghab Plain, Salamiyah, and Umm al-Tuyur. The records indicate that June 2026 saw the highest monthly number of victims in the governorate, with six recorded.

This documented record, complete with names and dates, bears witness to the recurring violence in public spaces, regardless of official narratives that portray these crimes as isolated, one-off incidents.

"Sudden Death"?

"Sudden death is horrible, and the feeling of loss is even harder." This is how Salwa (a pseudonym) described to Daraj the killing of her husband, a healthcare worker, who was shot dead by two unidentified gunmen in Homs.

That day, her husband had called his children to check how their exams were going, none of them knowing that he was saying goodbye. Salwa heard reports of gunfire near the hospital where her husband worked and tried calling him, but to no avail. A doctor at the hospital answered his phone and told her that her husband had been injured and was in critical condition. She raced to the hospital. Salwa recalls: "I don't want to remember

how I felt that day. When I arrived at the hospital, an employee saw me at the entrance. I was terrified, and he told me he couldn’t let me see him while I was in that state.”

Salwa waited a little longer, briefly allowing herself to hope that her husband was still in surgery, until a security officer asked who she was. She identified herself as his wife. He replied: “May God have mercy on his soul.”

She fainted. She woke up to a world without the man she had loved for years and been married to for a decade. All she could think about was: “What am I going to tell the children if they ask me why Daddy hasn’t come home?” Her voice choked with emotion as she summoned all her strength to recount the story to us.

Salwa’s grief and the painful circumstances of her husband’s death echo the findings of the database compiled by Syrians for Truth and Justice in Homs and Hama. According to the organization’s documentation covering January 2025 to August 2026, 89 victims were recorded across 55 incidents. Homs governorate accounted for the largest share, with 83% of all victims (74), compared with 15 in Hama governorate.

The organization’s data show that at least 22 incidents occurred in shops, workplaces, streets or on roads, while many records do not specify where the incidents took place. This does not necessarily mean that all these victims were individually targeted. The fact that a killing occurs in a public space does not, in itself, establish the nature of the targeting. Some killings may have been random or resulted from circumstances unrelated to the victim’s identity.

The data also reveal recurring incidents of killing, with a peak of 15 victims in February 2026, the highest monthly figure recorded during the period under review. Taken together, these figures reveal a troubling pattern of civilian killings, yet we found an official announcement confirming the arrest of suspects in only one of these incidents.

Official Framing: "An Unknown Perpetrator"

Against the backdrop of deadly violence on the ground, data compiled for this investigation by tracking and archiving coverage of killings in Homs and Hama by Syria's official news agency, SANA, between September 2025 and August 2026 reveal a gap between the reality on the ground and the official narrative.

Of the materials retrieved and analyzed using the agency's online search tools, only 14 news reports and official statements covered actual killings. Just five of these covered incidents documented by Syrians for Truth and Justice, accounting for 10 of the 70 victims recorded during the same period.

A review of the official news agency's coverage reveals a recurring pattern in its reporting on these crimes. Most reports concerning Homs described the perpetrators as "unidentified," with headlines such as "Woman Killed by Unidentified Gunmen in the Akrama Neighborhood," "Indiscriminate Shooting... Carried Out by Unidentified Individuals Inside a Café in the Village of Umm Hartain in Western Rural Homs," and "Two People Killed After Unidentified Gunmen Opened Fire on Them Inside a Shop in the Karm al-Louz Neighborhood." In two of these cases, the authorities announced the launch of investigations, but we found no subsequent reporting by the agency disclosing its findings or the perpetrators' identities.

SANA's coverage of Homs contained only one exception, in April 2026, when the Ministry of Interior announced the arrest of a man who confessed to participating in the killing of a civilian whose body was found in rural Homs. The ministry said that the detainee and his accomplices had admitted to carrying out robberies in the area. This was the only incident in SANA's coverage of Homs in which the arrest of suspects and the outcome of an investigation were announced.

Beyond SANA, on February 27, 2026, the official Al-Ikhbariya Syria Telegram channel and website quoted a source at the Ministry of Interior as saying that Internal Security forces in Homs had arrested those involved in

the victim’s killing and that the detainees had confessed that their motive was to steal his car.

The September 2025 incident in the village of Jadrin in rural Hama illustrates a pattern of official coverage that provides minimal details and offers no information on eventual accountability. According to SANA’s reporting, the crime claimed the lives of four residents of the village. At the time, the Internal Security chief announced that three individuals involved in the crime had been identified “in record time,” arrested and referred for investigation, pending their referral to the competent judicial authorities.

However, the official account made no mention of the motives behind the killings, the type of weapon used, or the actual circumstances surrounding the crime. We found no subsequent coverage by SANA of the case’s progress or any judicial rulings against the detainees.

Across the archived coverage examined in both governorates, sectarian motives appeared in the official narrative only once, and solely in the form of a denial. Following the killing of Iman Girgis in the Akrama neighborhood on February 23, 2026, the media officer at the Internal Security Directorate in Homs stated that circulating claims linking the incident to “sectarian or religious interpretations” were inaccurate. The agency published no dedicated coverage explicitly addressing the phenomenon.

The Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice Telegram channels published no reports on any of the 55 incidents documented by Syrians for Truth and Justice on the days they occurred. We collected all posts published by both channels on the day of each incident, the preceding day and the following day, totaling 637 messages, and reviewed those concerning killings in the two governorates.

During those same periods, the Ministry of Interior reported on the bombing of the Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib Mosque in the Wadi al-Dhahab neighborhood of Homs and the killing of a family inside their home in the Al-Bayad neighborhood of Hama on December 26, 2025. It reported on individual killings in the two governorates only when announcing the arrest of suspects.

SANA, however, carried statements from Internal Security authorities in Homs and Hama concerning four incidents on the organization’s list: the attack on Al-Kindi Hospital, the killing of a person in Salamiyah, the killing of Iman Girgis in the Akrama neighborhood and the attack in the village of Al-Qahira. In these statements, the authorities announced that they had launched investigations or were pursuing the perpetrators, without disclosing any of their identities.

Meanwhile, Al-Ikhbariya Syria’s Telegram channel and website reported on nine of the incidents documented by the organization on the days they occurred. The victims’ names were officially disclosed in only one of them.

Following an attack on a real estate office in the Akrama neighborhood on January 15, 2026, the channel reported only “injuries” that evening. We found no update on the casualty toll the following day, while the organization documented two deaths, one immediate and the other resulting from injuries sustained in the attack. Syria TV also published a video about the attack that same day, reporting that it had resulted in casualties.

The monitoring was limited to publications on the Telegram channels of the Ministries of Interior and Justice and Al-Ikhbariya Syria, Al-Ikhbariya’s website, and materials retrieved through SANA’s online search tools. It did not include the Facebook pages of the two ministries or Al-Ikhbariya because, unlike Telegram, Facebook does not display page posts to users who are not logged in or assign sequential numbers to posts, making it impossible to verify the completeness of the collected material. We therefore relied on archived copies of these pages available through the Internet Archive, in which we found no mention of any of the incidents. However, these archived copies do not cover every day.

The monitoring also excluded the accounts of the Internal Security commands in Homs and Hama, as we were unable to verify any official accounts belonging to them. Furthermore, gaps in the sequential numbering of Telegram messages on the days of the incidents suggest that some messages may have been deleted. We were unable to determine their contents.

Of the incidents involving 70 victims, SANA and Al-Ikhbariya published reports on 21 incidents, while neither the Ministry of Interior nor the Ministry of Justice Telegram channel reported on any of them. During the preparation of this investigation, we found no official announcement from either ministry providing a comprehensive account of the investigations into these cases.

“I Just Want to Know Why”

About a month after the killing of Salwa’s husband, the situation was no different in rural Hama. In the middle of winter 2026, Ahmad (a pseudonym), a young man in his twenties, rushed out of his home in rural Hama after hearing gunfire outside. He found neighbors gathered around his elderly father, whose bloodied body lay on the ground. He tried to save him, but his father did not survive.

At that stage of his life, his father had grown accustomed to visiting his agricultural land and feeding the animals he kept on a farm a short distance from home. Those simple daily rituals were how he unknowingly said goodbye to his family.

All Ahmad learned from witnesses was that his father had been shot by unidentified assailants whose vehicle and license plate were obscured by mud, further complicating the pursuit of justice. Ahmad says the government authorities have been cooperative. When we asked whether the incident was linked to the proliferation of uncontrolled weapons, he replied: “Exactly… uncontrolled weapons in the hands of a particular group.”

Ahmad buried himself in his father’s old papers, hoping to understand who might have benefited from his killing. He found no answers. In an exhausted voice, he says: “I no longer want to know who did it. I just want to know why.”

The killings continued into September 2026. On September 22, a masked gunman killed Yamen Shaddoud (21) and Ali Suleiman al-Fares at a shop in the village of Tal Sikin al-Qaada in western rural Hama, according to surveillance footage from inside the shop, which we cross-referenced with our sources in the village.

Sumayya, who survived the May 2025 attack in Homs, underwent several surgeries and regained her mobility. However, the hand with which she shielded her sister from a bullet remained paralyzed at the time she gave her testimony.

“I don’t know why I am still alive… Perhaps it is divine providence that wants people to hear my story,” she says.

This report was produced in collaboration with Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ).
