

Two Christians killed in armed attack in Syrian village



The Christian village of Anaz in Syria's Valley of the Christians region has been gripped by mass protests and church vigils following the fatal shooting of two young Christians on October 1.

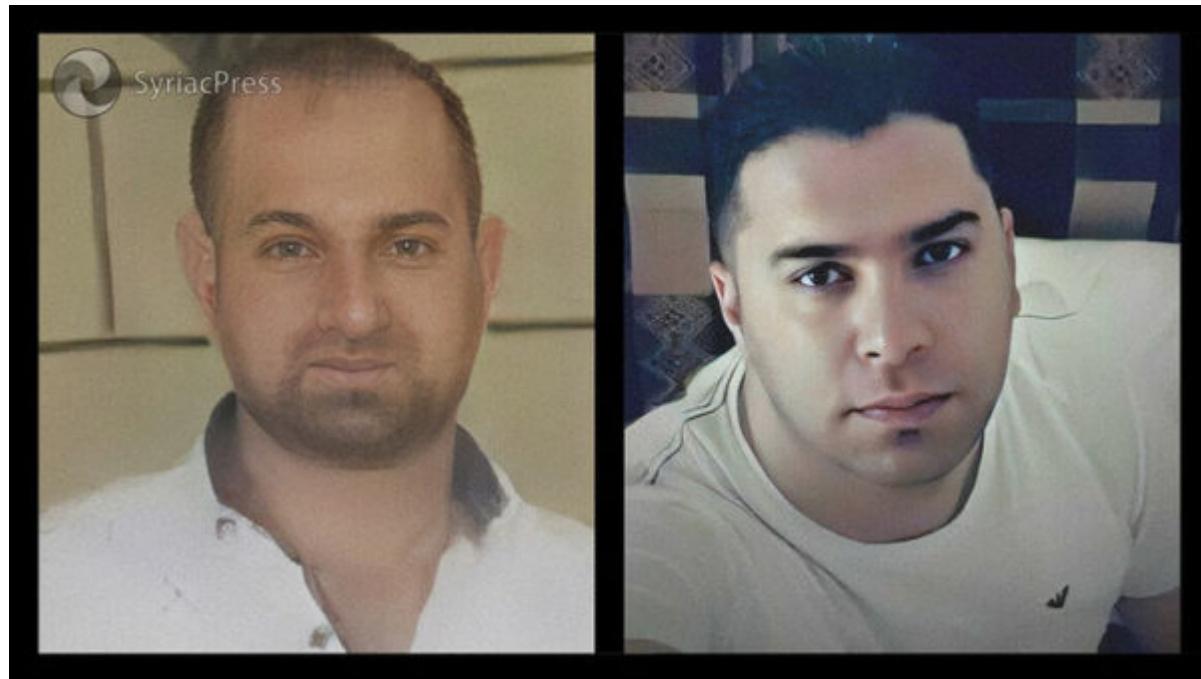
Masked gunmen opened fire on a group of young people gathered near the local village head's office, killing two Orthodox men, Wissam George and Shafiq Rafiq Mansour, who were cousins, and seriously wounding a third man, Pierre Hariqis. The attack prompted immediate unrest, with residents blocking roads, burning tires, and setting fire to a security checkpoint while accusing authorities of failing to protect civilians, reports Global Orthodox.

The violence spread across the Valley of the Christians as neighboring villages joined a general strike, shuttering businesses throughout the region. Church bells rang simultaneously across multiple communities in a signal of mourning and protest.

On October 2, thousands participated in a torchlight procession from St. Elijah

Church to the shooting site. Funerals were held the following day in Anaz, with traditional Syrian Christian ceremonies including drums, hymns, and public lamentations honoring the victims as martyrs. Memorial services were also conducted in Damascus, where residents of the historic Bab Touma district gathered in solidarity.

The funeral for Wissam George and Shafiq Rafiq was served by His Eminence Metropolitan Bassilos (Mansour) and other Antiochian Orthodox hierarchs and clergy. His Eminence spoke about the history of the Valley of the Christians, filled with love, peace, tolerance, brotherhood, national unity, and embracing the other, especially during catastrophes and crises.



He also warned against the concept of “retaliatory justice,” which would work to fragment Syrian society, and called for replacing it with the rule of law, citizenship, and justice, which is the foundation of the kingdom.

At the same time, the killings prompted several Christian candidates to withdraw from upcoming parliamentary elections. Ghassan Yousef al-Shami, one of those withdrawing, called for urgent legislation to control weapons proliferation in Syria and strengthen civilian protections.

The incident marks another violent attack on Syria’s Christian community following a terrorist assault on an Orthodox church in Damascus in June that killed and injured dozens.

The Patriarchate of Antioch issued the following statement on October 3, condemning the attack:

Today the village of Anaz and the Valley of the Christians, with all its symbolism, bids farewell to the youth who were struck by treacherous hands in a sinful crime that shames the forehead of humanity. At a time when Syria is trying to rise again, the hand of sin extends once more to tamper with civil peace, the fundamental element of the unified coexistence that the Church of Antioch has sought and continues to seek to preserve despite all changes.

As the Antiochian Church condemns what occurred in this sinful act and places this denounced crime in the hands of officials to uncover the perpetrators and hold them accountable, it prays with the hearts of all its faithful and raises its supplication to the Father of Lights and God of all consolation to receive into His embrace the souls of those who have departed to Him, to console hearts, and to grant Syria the peace for which it longs.

While remaining in hope, it affirms its steadfastness in its faith and through this steadfastness rejects all fear and dread. It asks the Lord God to guide the ship of its salvation amid the waves of this world, He who is blessed forever.



The attack has intensified concerns about security and minority rights in Syria, particularly in areas like the Valley of the Christians that have historically served as refuges for Christian communities during the country's prolonged conflict.