

UK Syrians Commemorate a Year of Liberation

8 December 2025

[Event details for celebrations on 8 December found below]

Syrian communities across the UK commemorate one year since Syria's liberation from Bashar Assad's rule. On 8 December 2024, Assad was ousted following an eleven-day military offensive that brought an end to more than fifty years of authoritarian rule under the Assad family — first Hafez Assad (1973–2000) and then his son Bashar Assad (2000–2024).

Maya Estwani, who sought asylum in the UK in 2019, describes her emotions as the anniversary of the Assad regime's downfall approaches: *"Leaving Syria was the hardest decision of my life, after many of my fellow activists were detained and I knew I was next, which forced us to flee. Knowing that the regime responsible for so much suffering has fallen brings an enormous sense of joy and justice. But I still wait for the day that the perpetrators will face trial for what they did to me and to the Syrian people."*

For many Syrians in the UK, however, this joyous and historic occasion is bittersweet. In an unusually swift decision by the Home Office only one day after Assad's fall, the UK Government suspended asylum claims and applications for indefinite leave to remain for Syrian nationals, leaving hundreds in legal and economic limbo. Many remain unable to work, secure housing, or access higher education. They also cannot return to Syria as the security situation remains unstable in many parts of the country, and countless homes and areas remain destroyed and thus uninhabitable.

Abdulaziz Almashi, member of the Board of Directors of the Syrian British Consortium and founding member of the Syria Solidarity Campaign, says: *"No refugee or asylum seeker should ever be compelled to return to the country from which they were forced to flee. Any return must be voluntary and initiated by the refugees themselves. It is essential that we respect refugees, uphold their dignity, and protect their fundamental right to self-determination."*

Syria's liberation came at the expense of tens of thousands of detainees who were killed under torture, millions of civilians who fled their homes, and entire towns and villages destroyed by bombardment. Over the past year, Syrians in the UK and throughout the diaspora have been working relentlessly to contribute to rebuilding a modern, stable, and economically prosperous Syria rooted in democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human dignity.



Layla Atassi, “A year after Syria’s liberation, I still feel a genuine sense of pride and relief whenever our country is mentioned. Even from the UK, Syrians here are speaking about home with a hopefulness we haven’t known in years. Although uncertainty remains both in Syria and even here in the UK with unkind policies towards migrants and refugees, this year has given us room to breathe, to reconnect with our heritage, and to imagine a bright future. The road ahead is long, but there is no population that works as hard as Syrians, it is built into our fabric.”

Dr Haytham Alhamwi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Syrian British Consortium and General Manager of Rethink Rebuild Society, summarises the hope of many British Syrians that the UK will support Syria on its path to recovery. “We call on the UK to support Syria during this critical time. The historic fall of the brutal Assad dictatorship must be followed by genuine international partnership, offering Syrians the opportunity to build a better future.”

The Syrian communities in London and Manchester will be celebrating the anniversary of Syria’s liberation at the following times/places:

London:

8 December:

Sattavis Patidar Centre, J/W, Forty Ave, Wembley Park, Wembley HA9 9PE at 5-11 pm

Manchester:

8 December:

MEA Central School, Lytham Road, M14 6PL at 6-9 pm

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