

# Meister & Partner

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*Press and Public Announcement*

## **Syrian Government Pursuing a Policy of Disinformation**

### **Immediate Release of Journalists Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad**

As lawyers for Eva Maria Michelmann and Mehmet Nizam Aslan (pseudonym: Ahmet Polad) and their families, we are taking the occasion of World Press Freedom Day to provide an update on developments about their detention. Since 18 January 2026, the Syrian government has been holding them for 105 days, in violation of international protections for journalists.

On 27 April, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called for further clarification (<https://cpj.org/2026/04/cpj-demands-transparency-as-german-reporter-confirmed-detained-in-syria/>). About the Syrian government's stance: "*CPJ contacted several official Syrian representatives at the Ministry of Information and the Office of the Governor of Aleppo, who stated they had no information regarding the arrest of the two journalists.*"

Our law firm represents the two journalists and their family members. The Federal Foreign Office was already informed in detail on 3 March 2026. It was not until 23 April 2026 that it contacted Eva Maria Michelmann and visited her in prison. Contrary to Article 36 of the 'Vienna Convention on Consular Relations', which is also recognised by Syria, Syria did not provide 'immediate' information.

Following a widespread solidarity movement and growing criticism of the Syrian transitional government's conduct from human rights and journalists' organisations, the Syrian government officially admitted on 30 April that both journalists had been arrested in Raqqa on 18 January. In recent days, dpa has circulated a statement by Omar Ibrahim, head of the press department at the Syrian Ministry of Information, in which he admitted that the arrest had taken place in Raqqa on 18 January 2026. (A detailed account of his statement on the Lebanese online platform 961today: <https://961today.com/257998/>) The two journalists were then identified as foreign nationals and detained on suspicion of illegal residence pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. They are considered "foreign fighters." It is further said that the German government was notified of the arrest, which stands in some contradiction to the information provided by the Federal Foreign Office, which said that it only became aware of the matter on 23 April.

The official statement makes no mention of the ongoing incommunicado detention. Furthermore, there is still no possibility of contact for family members, lawyers, doctors, or representatives of the International Red Cross. The Syrian government's statement fabricates inaccurate accounts to justify the criminalisation of the two journalists.

In fact, the two journalists were in Raqqa with permission from DAANES and the SDF. As is well known, Raqqa was liberated in 2017 during the so-called 'Battle of Raqqa' by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) from the terrorist group Islamic State (IS), which had made Raqqa the capital of its caliphate. Since then, the city has been under the control of the Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES – also known as Rojava) and its military wing, the SDF. Both held press passes and had relationships to the YRA, the Free Media

Union of Rojava. In any case, on 18 January 2026, Raqqa was not under the control of the Syrian Transitional Government (STG). It was not until 29 January 2026 that an agreement was concluded between DAANES and the STG, aimed at finding peaceful solutions to their differences and stipulating that the STG would assume state authority over Raqqa. The ANF news agency, which has close ties to the democratic forces in Rojava, also accurately criticises the STG's disinformation policy in an article dated 1 May 2026: *"More than three months after their abduction from Raqqa, Damascus confirms the detention of journalist Eva Maria Michelmann and her colleague Ahmed Polad. However, the transitional government's account contradicts known events."* (<https://english.anf-news.com/kurdistan/syria-confirms-detention-of-journalists-abducted-from-raqqa-85193> )

The actual "known facts" are that both were in Raqqa investigating the resurgence and revival of IS cells to report on them. On 18 January 2026, Raqqa was attacked by marauding Islamist Arab tribal militias. At the same time, IS cells became active. Civilians were killed, women raped and hundreds of people abducted. The two journalists fled to a youth centre administered by the DAANES, where many families had also taken refuge. SDF units also withdrew into the building. Gunfights broke out between the SDF units and the Islamist tribal militias, and later with the advancing Syrian government army. Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad were not involved in these clashes. They continued to report on the events from inside the building. The news agency ETHA, for which both worked, reported on 30 April 2026: *">The noose is tightening. They are on the ground floor. We are trying to buy some time. < That was the last voice message from Ahmet Polad, whose real name is Mehmet Nizam Aslan, with whom we worked at Özgür TV."* (<https://etha15.com/haberdetay/serpil-arслан-yazdi-eva-ve-ahmet-nerede-israr-dayanisma-ve-ozgurluk-mucadelesi-223005> ) Both were arrested. Their journalistic equipment – including cameras – and press cards were confiscated. Their identities were proved from the outset. Witnesses later gave unbelievably detailed accounts of this.

One consequence of the Syrian army's so-called 'offensive' was that SDF units were forced to abandon their guard duties at al-Aqtan prison in northern Raqqa, resulting in the release of hundreds of IS terrorists. (<https://rojvainformationcenter.org/2026/01/isis-escapes-as-a-result-of-syrian-army-assault/> )

The German government is ignoring the fact that the policies of the Syrian interim president, who himself served as a leader of the fascist Al-Nusra Front and the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) that appeared from it, are promoting the resurgence of IS. Current sources confirm: the policies of the Syrian transitional government are directed against those who actually fought and contained IS: Kurdish, Alawite, Druze, Christian (Aramaic) and democratic Arab structures, the SDF/DAANES, independent women's organisations such as the Women's Protection Units (YPJ), the left-wing and democratic self-administration, journalists, environmental activists ... The sources confirm that the military operation against the SDF/DAANES specifically targeted prisons and camps belonging to the anti-IS system; this led to breakouts, releases, and transfers. In the captured areas such as Raqqa, pro-government tribal militias, former jihadist groups, and the security forces of the new Ministry of the Interior worked closely together.

The STG had a specific reason for the arrest. They had been investigating the resurgence of IS and its links to other Islamist groups, including within the government. This was clearly intended to be prevented. The Syrian government declared them a security risk, had them taken hostage, and subjected them to months of disappearance and torture.

The Syrian transitional government must not be allowed to get away with this! For the reality is also that IS is regaining strength in Raqqa. On 25 February 2026, 'The National' reported

on daily IS attacks in the north-east, thirteen deaths in ten attacks, and the activities of IS cells in Raqqa. (<https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2026/02/25/isis-launching-daily-attacks-in-north-eastern-syria-as-fears-of-security-vacuum-grow/> )

Whilst opposition figures and members of the Alawite, Kurdish, Christian or Druze communities are disappearing, hundreds of SDF members remain in captivity and journalists are vanishing and being tortured, representatives of the German government and German companies are meeting continuously with the Syrian transitional government to discuss reconstruction, the investment climate and banking channels.

The Syrian government's disinformation policy must not be accepted uncritically. It abducted Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad on 18 January 2026 and is holding them hostage.

**Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad must be released at once!**

*Voices of family members:*

**Rotraut Hake–Michelmann, mother of the abducted journalist Eva-Maria Michelmann:**

3 May 2026

*“The Syrian government’s allegations against Eva are absurd! The regime has been holding my daughter in solitary confinement for more than one hundred days, with no contact with us or her lawyers. I demand the immediate release of my daughter.”*

**Dr Antonius Michelmann, brother of the abducted journalist Eva-Maria Michelmann:**

3 May 2026

*“Contrary to the lies and denials of the Syrian transitional government, we have found Eva. Through proper detective work involving many witnesses, we have been able to reconstruct the events and to prove, Eva is being held in a Syrian torture prison. We had predicted later criminalisation and further lies. We do not accept this and demand the immediate release of my sister!”*

**Adil Aslan, father of the abducted journalist Mehmet Nizam Aslan (Ahmet Polad)**

3 May 2025

*“We want our children back unharmed. We want both Eva and Ahmet. As long as I live, I will not give up. The Turkish state could, if it wanted to, secure their release today. I call on all journalists’ associations and all political parties to take charge of this matter. We must be told what has become of our children. Our children are journalists; they were abducted whilst doing their work.”*