



**Ms Ursula von der Leyen**  
**President of the European Commission**  
**Ms Kaja Kallas**  
**High Representative/Vice-President**

24 March 2026

**Capture and disappearance of journalists Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad by the Syrian Transitional Government's armed forces**

Dear President von der Leyen,

Dear High Representative Kallas,

We, Members of the European Parliament, write to draw your attention to the disappearance of two journalists in Syria – one German and the other Kurdish with Turkish nationality – and to ask you to do all you can to find their whereabouts and secure their release. This is a case that is not only of vital concern to those involved but also has major implications for the press freedom and the protection of journalists in war zones, and for the evolution of the Syrian state, with which European countries have been building connections.

Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad were last seen in Raqqa on 18 January 2026, when they were reporting on the attacks by the Syrian Transitional Government on the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. As fighting intensified, they took refuge in a building along with other civilians, and it is reported that when that building was evacuated, they were taken away in a military vehicle belonging to the Transitional Government's armed forces.

Like thousands of others who disappeared during the fighting, it is not known where they are being held, or by whom, or even if they are still alive. Despite publicity and the involvement of the German Foreign Office, no information has been forthcoming from the Syrian Transitional Government.

We therefore call on the European Commission to demand from the Syrian Transitional Government:

- Immediate clarification of the fate of the missing journalists Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad and for their release.
- Transparent information on the health of all missing persons in Raqqa (estimated to be approximately 4,000).
- Access for the International Committee of the Red Cross and for human rights organisations to persons abducted and detained by the Syrian Transitional Government.

This case goes beyond the two individuals; it is a test of Europe's commitment to press freedom and human rights. The EU must act with urgency, consistency and courage to protect those who have risked their lives to report firsthand on the developments on the ground in Syria. The EU's credibility is on the line, and so are lives.

We remain at your disposal for further information. Furthermore, we urge the European Commission to provide a clear and timely response regarding the actions it will take to address this grave case of unlawful detention and disappearance.

We look forward to your reply and appreciate your immediate attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Katrin Langensiepen, MEP, Greens/EFA, Germany

Özlem Alev Demirel, MEP, The Left, Germany

Rudi Kennes, MEP, The Left, Belgium

Francisco Assis, MEP, S&D, Portugal

Martin Schirdewan, MEP, The Left, Germany

Damien Carême, MEP, The Left, France

Isabel Serra Sánchez, MEP, The Left, Spain

Per Clausen, MEP, The Left, Denmark

Leoluca Orlando, MEP, Greens/EFA, Italy

Jaume Asens Llodrà, MEP, Greens/EFA, Spain

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