

29 March , 2026

Open Letter: Al-Sharaa is not welcome in Berlin!

On Monday, March 30, 2026, the German government will welcome Syrian interim President Ahmet al-Sharaa (formerly known as al-Jolani) on a state visit to Berlin.

Al-Sharaa, who appointed himself president following the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, was for years a leading figure in the Islamist militia Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) with close ties to al-Qaeda. Even though he is now courted internationally—from state visits to Western capitals to appearances at the UN General Assembly—this does nothing to change the reality of his rule: it remains the politics of Islamist militias.

In 2025, under his transitional government, massacres of Alawites, Druze, and Kurds took place, in which thousands of people were killed. Starting on January 6, 2026, the Syrian army launched an offensive against the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES/Rojava)—a region that exemplifies democracy, women's liberation, and international understanding. The Syrian army's offensive claimed hundreds of lives. Even though an agreement has been reached, the future of Rojava's progressive project is currently uncertain and the mood in Syria is tense. Above all, the achievements of women must be highlighted and defended.

Since the start of the offensive, thousands of people have been abducted and kidnapped from northeastern Syria. The number of missing persons is far higher than the number of prisoners admitted by the government. To this day, the transitional government has refused to allow the immediate release and return of the kidnapped individuals.

On January 18, 2026, German journalist Eva Maria Michelmann and her colleague Ahmet Polad were abducted in Raqqa by forces of the transitional government. This abduction represents a massive blow to press freedom. While a German citizen is being held captive by al-Sharaa's security apparatus, the German government welcomes its leader with open arms.

This state visit sends a disastrous signal: German foreign policy is inviting the representatives of a government whose militias massacre minorities, attack democratic rights, and abduct civilians and journalists. We call on Chancellor Friedrich Merz and the representatives of the Federal Foreign Office to address the disappearance of German citizen Eva Maria Michelmann on Monday and demand clarity.

We demand:

- **The immediate and unconditional release of Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad as well as all abducted persons from northeastern Syria.**
- **Access for the International Committee of the Red Cross and human rights organizations to the persons abducted and detained by the STG**
- **No further normalization with a regime that oppresses, massacres the Syrian people and persons**

Signatories:

Family of the abducted journalist Eva Michelmann

Cansu Özdemir, MdB, Die Linke

Katrin Langensiepen, Member of the European Parliament (Greens/EFA)

Katrin Schmidberger, MdA Spokesperson for Housing and Rent in Berlin, Grüne

Özlem Alev Demirel, Member of the European Parliament, die Linke

Zozan Gül, Die Linke Duisburg

Betty Lerche, filmmaker

Dîlan Karacadag, journalist

Civan Akbulut, Chair of the IAKR

Düzen Tekkal, founder and chairwoman of HÁWAR.help

Esra Gültekin, photojournalist

Mariam Claren, Iran-activist and daughter of former political prisoner Nahid Taghavi

Avin Hummitzsch, spokesperson of People's Bridge

“Where Is Eva?” Initiative

Voices of Solidarity, Mahnwache Köln e.V.

TSP - Prisoners Voice Platform