

Press release from the family members of Eva Maria Michelmann and their lawyer

Cologne, March 10, 2026

On March 10, 2026, a press conference was held by the family members of Eva Maria Michelmann and their lawyer Roland Meister. The moderator, spokesperson for the Rojava solidarity structure "People's Bridge," Avîn Hummitzsch, opened the press conference with the information that German citizen and journalist Eva Maria Michelmann has been missing since January 18, 2026. On February 28, 2026, the news agency "Etkin Haber Ajansı" (ETHA) reported that she was last seen in Raqqa, Syria, while she was reporting alongside journalist Ahmet Polad. After the siege of the city of Raqqa by units of the Syrian transitional government, the two journalists were put into a vehicle and have been missing ever since. The family's lawyer, Roland Meister, Eva Maria's mother, Rotraut Hake-Michelmann, and Eva Maria's brother, Dr. Antonius Michelmann, spoke as well. Various representatives of the press were present, including from WDR, n-tv, Deutschlandfunk, Deutsche Welle, RTL, Rote Fahne News, Perspektive Online, ETHA, Özgür Politika, Medya Haber, and Stêrk TV.

The family's lawyer, Roland Meister, continued by stating that he had been hired by the family to locate and secure her release. As part of the operation by Al-Sharaa and the Syrian transitional government, large parts of the Democratic Self-Administration of North-East Syria were attacked. These attacks led to the situation in which Eva Maria disappeared, suggesting that the journalist was captured. Eva Maria's whereabouts are still unknown.

Meister also stated that the Foreign Office was informed of this situation on March 3. This was followed by publications and activities by the German Journalists' Union (DJU), various organizations such as Reporters Without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the International Federation of Journalists, the ver.di union and its news magazine, and the Rojava solidarity organization People's Bridge. The International Red Cross was also mobilized and began contacting various contacts in the region, including Mazlum Abdi, representative of the autonomous self-administration of North and East Syria. Cansu Özdemir, a member of the German Bundestag, was also contacted. Özdemir has already approached the Foreign Office. There has also been direct contact with political friends in Rojava, who are trying to locate Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad.

On the day of the press conference, a phone call with Ms. Rau from the Foreign Office took place, all relevant authorities in the Middle East, not only in Syria, have now been notified. The data and a photo of Eva Maria Michelmann were passed on in the course of this in order to determine their whereabouts. As of today, the German government still has not received any information from the Syrian transitional government. Roland Meister added: "We know from a journalist in Damascus that the name Eva Maria Michelmann is unknown locally."

He went on to say:

"Eva Maria has been missing without a trace for over 50 days. That is frightening. Currently, there is a possibility that she has been imprisoned or that she is held in informal captivity – meaning that she has been abducted and not yet handed over to the official government. However, there is also the possibility that she has been killed and buried in anonymous mass graves. There is a fourth possibility. Given that Turkey was directly involved in the military conflicts in January and is cooperating with the Syrian transitional government, she may have been handed over to Turkey, as the Kurdish journalist Ahmet Polad, who disappeared alongside her, has Turkish citizenship. The current situation warrants concern and fear. The Foreign Office seems to be taking these matters seriously. The Syrian transitional government is seen as an ally of Germany, but the disappearance

of a German citizen and the subsequent lack of any information on her whereabouts poses serious problems for those relations.”

Eva Maria's mother, Rotraut Hake-Michelmann, then spoke about the situation of her missing daughter. The last sign of life from Eva Maria was on January 18, 2026, and since then no further contact has been possible. Even though she fears that her daughter is no longer alive, she remains hopeful in view of the current situation. She noted that many courageous journalists are currently reporting from the hot spots around the world, for which they are paying with their lives, among other things.

Dr. Antonius Michelmann, Eva Maria's brother, is also worried about his sister. She had always been a cosmopolitan, courageous, and honest person who understood Rojava as a magnet for solidarity and the embodiment of different peoples coming together. Currently, many people are campaigning for the release of at least 1,070 prisoners of the operation, which gives rise to hope that Eva Maria will also be released. He called on the German government to stand up for Eva Maria and clarify her situation. He drew attention to Ursula von der Leyen's visit in January 2026, during which the Syrian transitional government was promised 620 million euros. This indicates close relationships that would make it possible to locate Eva Maria.

The press conference ended after questions from the press representatives and answers from the lawyer and family members.