

Abducted for 100 days – no news for 100 days from German journalist Eva Maria Michelmann

Open Letter to Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

Dear Ms. von der Leyen, Dear Mr. Steinmeier, Dear Mr. Merz,

On January 18, 2026, German journalist Eva Maria Michelmann was abducted in Syria along with Ahmet Polad, a Kurdish journalist originally from Turkey. They were in Raqqa to report on developments on the ground, particularly regarding the activities of the inhumane Islamic State (IS).

On the orders of the self-proclaimed Syrian Transitional Government (STG) under President Ahmed al-Sharaa (also known by his former Islamist nom de guerre Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani or Jolani), the Syrian army, together with Islamic Arab tribal militias, attacked the territory of the Democratic Self-Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)—also known as Rojava—in January of this year. When heavier military clashes broke out in the city of Raqqa on January 18, 2026, they sought refuge along with others in a building belonging to a DAANES youth organization.

The building is eventually surrounded by security forces of the Syrian Transitional Government. Negotiations took place between the forces of the Syrian Transitional Government (STG) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) of DAANES, and the building was to be evacuated. While a group was allowed to leave the building and exit the city unharmed, eyewitnesses reported that the two journalists were, on the orders of a Syrian government commander, taken to a security forces vehicle, which then drove away.

Since then, there has been no news of their whereabouts, although Eva Michelmann's mother, brother, and lawyer have appealed to the German government with urgent requests. Members of the European Parliament therefore contacted the European Commission and the European External Action Service directly. Furthermore, several members of the German Bundestag contacted the federal government.

On April 6, eyewitness Casim Mihemmed reported via video on the abduction of Eva Michelmann and Ahmet Polad. He also stated that on January 18, the head of Internal Security in Aleppo, Mohammed Abdul Ghani, was involved in the evacuation of the building. He works directly for the Syrian Interim Government. This confirms that the two journalists were taken away by forces of the Syrian Interim Government.

On April 11, as part of a prisoner exchange between the Syrian Democratic Forces (QSD) and the Syrian Interim Government, approximately 400 people were released and returned to northeastern Syria. Some of the released prisoners who had been held captive in Aleppo have stated that Eva and Ahmed are also in that prison.

Eva Maria Michelmann is 36-years old and born in Siegburg She has been socially active since her youth and studied social work. Her family describes her as a fighter against injustice, racism, and fascism, and as a supporter of women seeking protection, refugees, and the homeless.

According to reports, Eva Maria Michelmann had been living in Rojava (northern and eastern Syria) since 2022 and worked there as a freelance journalist, including for the news agency Etkin Haber Ajansı (ETHA). She was arrested on January 18, 2026, along with Ahmet Polad, by the Syrian transitional government. The government has so far refused to provide any information. For

100 days, there has been no information about Eva's condition or whereabouts. Her family and friends are deeply concerned.

We regret to note that, despite good relations with the Syrian transitional government and despite President al-Sharaa's state visit, the German government and the European Commission have yet to provide the family or the public with satisfactory information regarding what steps they have taken to secure Eva Maria Michelmann's release.

The detention of the journalists is an attack on press freedom. According to recent investigations, the two are being held in a prison in the city of Aleppo. The German government must fulfill its responsibility, visit Eva, and secure her immediate release. German citizens residing abroad remain under the legal protection of the German government.

We urgently call on Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to advocate for the release of journalists Eva Maria Michelmann and Ahmet Polad and to secure their freedom.

Signatories:

Rotraut Hake-Michelmann, retiree, mother of Eva Maria Michelmann

Dr. Antonius Michelmann, teacher, brother of Eva Maria Michelmann

Roland Meister, attorney, the family's lawyer

Avin Hummitzsch, spokesperson for People's Bridge

Arzu Demir, Journalist, Etkin Haber Ajansı

Düzen Tekkal, founder and chair of [HÁWAR.help](https://www.hawar.help) e.V.

Mariam Claren, Iran activist and Head of Iran Programmes at [HÁWAR.help](https://www.hawar.help) e.V.

Daniela Sepehri, activist and journalist

Mina Khani, human rights activist

BATTAL (Yali), singer-songwriter, expert on protection against violence

Theresia Crone, activist and columnist

Katja Rumiantseva, human rights activist

Hibba-Tun-Noor Kauser, SPD city councillor, Offenbach

Özlem Demirel, MEP, Die Linke

Lea Reisner, Member of the Bundestag, Die Linke

Gina Waibel, education influencer and author

Orkan Özdemir, Member of the Berlin House of Representatives, SPD

Pablo Charlemoine (Mal Élevé), musician (Mal Élevé)

Dario Schramm, author and spokesperson for Junges Wirtschaftsforum

Hami Nguyen, author

Katrin Langensiepen, MEP Greens/EFA
Ruben Neugebauer, activist
Jakob Springfeld, activist and author
Ina Rumiantseva, Chair of Taskforce Belarus e.V., winner of the Werner Schulz Prize
Nadine Primo, freelance author & activist
Erik Marquardt, MEP Greens/EFA
Nicole Gohlke, Member of the Bundestag, The Left
Ines Schwerdtner, Member of the Bundestag, The Left
Clara Bünger, Member of the German Bundestag (Die Linke)
Vinzenz Glaser, Member of the German Bundestag (Die Linke)
Lukas Benner, Member of the German Bundestag (Die Grünen)
Gregor Gysi, Member of the German Bundestag (Die Linke)
Bodo Ramelow, Member of the German Bundestag (Die Linke)
Ates Gürpınar, Member of the German Bundestag (Die Linke)
Ferat Kocak, Member of the German Bundestag (Die Linke)
Lorenz Gösta Beutin, Member of the German Bundestag (Die Linke)
Zada Sahilovic, MP, The Left
Sarah Vollath, MP, The Left
Jorrit Bosch, MP, The Left
Cem Ince, MP, The Left
Marcel Bauer, MP, The Left
Caren Lay, MP, The Left
Violetta Bock, MP, The Left
Dietmar Bartsch, MP, The Left
Cansu Özdemir, MP, Foreign Affairs Spokesperson
Maren Kaminski, MP, The Left
Jan Köstering, MP, The Left
Kathrin Gebel, MP, The Left
Desiree Becker, MP, The Left
Michael Arndt, MP, The Left
Sahra Mirow, MP, The Left
Mirze Edis, MP, The Left

Luke Hoss, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Doris Achelwilm, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Agnes Conrad, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Lizzy Schubert, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Sascha Wagner, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Katrin Fey, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Isabelle Vandre, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Janine Wissler, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Luigi Pantisano, Member of the Bundestag, The Left Party

Luna Möbius, content creator

Luisa Neubauer, activist and author

Nam Duy Nguyen, Member of the State Parliament (Die Linke)

Martin Schirdewan, Member of the European Parliament (Die Linke)

Henriette Held, spokesperson for Grüne Jugend

Sebastian 23, author

Enad Altaweel, member of the Berlin regional executive of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

Fehim Işık, journalist

Şeyda Kurt, writer.

Civan Akbulut, Chair of the Information Centre on Anti-Kurdish Racism (IAKR)

Betty Lerche, Filmmaker

Dr Kerem Schamberger, Author and Activist

Isminaz Temel, Journalist

David Schliesing, Member of the German Bundestag, The Left

Jenny Keasden, Journalist

Wolfgang Lettow, Member of the editorial team at Gefangenen Info

Dr Partho Sarothi Ray, Professor, International Solidarity for Academic Freedom, India (InSAF India)

Fehim Işık, journalist

Cahit Mervan, journalist

Selman Aslan, journalist

Heseen Qazi, journalist

Barzan Şaswar, presenter

Ali Güler, journalist
Hüseyin Dağ, journalist
Ergün Depi, journalist
Erem Kansoy, journalist
Mahir Üzmez, journalist
Ali Kenanoğlu, co-spokesperson for the HDK
Amed Dicle, journalist
Besime Konca, activist
Bahadır Altan, retired pilot
Duygu Bozkurt, Medya Haber TV
Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, journalist
Newroz Uysal Aslan, lawyer / DEM Party MP for Şırnak
Fırat Can, journalist
Çağdaş Kaplan, journalist
Ercan Jan Aktaş, coordination member of the European Freedom and Peace Forum
Faysal Sarıyıldız, politician
Hayri Tunç, journalist
Halil Savda, journalist
Kemal Aytaç, lawyer
Fatoş Göksungur, TEV-EKO co-spokesperson for Europe
Halil Savda, journalist
Filiz Zeyrek, journalist
Musa Özüğurlu, journalist
İshak Kocabıyık, co-spokesperson for the 10 October Peace Association
Hatice Çevik, co-spokesperson for the 10 October Peace Association
Nuray Çevirmen, human rights activist
Kıvanç Eliaçık, writer at İlketv.com.tr
Evrin Kepenek, journalist
Nursel Aydoğan, politician
Abdurrahman Gök, journalist
Mukaddes E. Çelik, author
Gülizar Tuncer, lawyer

Fatih Polat, journalist
Mertcan Titiz, co-chair of the SYKP
Muharrem Ender Öndeş, journalist
Elif Torun Öneren, Chair of the Revolutionary Party
Ömer Öneren, politician
Özgür Ateş, Co-Chair of the İHD Dersim branch
İbrahim Akın, MP for the DEM Party
Eren Keskin, lawyer, human rights activist
Nedim Türfent, journalist
Çetin Yaman, journalist
Mehtap Sert, lawyer
Halide Türkoğlu, spokesperson for the DEM Party's Women's Council
Gülcan Kaçmaz Sayyigit, DEM Party MP
Ayfer Koçak, co-chair of KESK
Ahmet Karagöz, co-chair of KESK
Mehmet Sıddık Akın, Co-Chair of SES
Mesut Balcan, Chair of Haber-Sen
Kemal Irmak, Chair of Eğitim-Sen
Hayko Bağdat, journalist, author and artist
Ahmet Nesin, journalist
Ahmet Yildirim, former HDP MP
Burcugül Çubuk, DEM Party MP
Meral Danış Beştaş, HDK Co-Chair
Dr Hakan Altun, academic
Sibel Yigitalp, former HDP MP
Önder Çakar, filmmaker
Hakan Tas, former MP for Die Linke in Berlin
Kemal Bülbül, former HDP MP
Turgut Dedeoğlu / Chair of DİSK-Basın-İş (Union of Press, Publishing and Printing Workers)
Gabi Fechtner, Chair of the MLPD
Füsun Erdoğan, journalist, author, JIN TV
Hüseyin Şenol, journalist, author, Avrupa Demokrat

Necati Abay, journalist, Atilim newspaper

Hamide Akbayir, former member of the North Rhine-Westphalia State Parliament

Jean-François Dumont, journalist, Brussels

Organisations:

“Freedom for Eva and Ahmet” initiative

People’s Bridge

En-GAJE (Ensemble – Support Group for Exiled Journalists/Brussels)

CÊNÎ – Kurdish Women’s Office for Peace e.V.

Green Youth

HÁWAR.help, e.V.

HENGAW

Internationalist Commune Rojava

ICAD – International Coordination Against Disappearances

Komün magazine

kolibri.

#LeaveNoOneBehind

Pena-Ger e.V., die bundesweite Onlineberatungsstelle für Geflüchtete

SYKP

RiseUp4Rojava from Rojava

Voices of Solidarity – Cologne Vigil Association

TSP – Platform for the Voices of Prisoners

YRA – Free Press Union in North-East Syria