

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001245/26
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Per Clausen (The Left), Hanna Gedin (The Left), Jonas Sjöstedt (The Left)
(25 March 2026)

Subject: Disappearance of German journalist Eva Maria Michelmann and Kurdish journalist Ahmed Polad in Raqqa, Syria, and the EU's efforts

Two journalists have been missing since the city of Raqqa was captured by the forces of the Syrian transitional government on 18 January 2026 ⁽¹⁾, and it is feared that they have been forcibly 'disappeared'. The two disappeared journalists are German journalist Eva Maria Michelmann (who was working for ETHA) and Kurdish journalist Ahmet Polad (who was working with outlets such as Kurdistan Azad and Özgür TV). Eyewitnesses reported that they were put in a vehicle belonging to Syrian transitional government forces ⁽²⁾.

The case of the two journalists also highlights the fact that thousands of civilians remain unaccounted for, or have been arbitrarily detained, following the Syrian transitional government's January 2026 military operations in north-east Syria.

In connection with this, can the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy kindly answer the following:

1. How — if at all — have EU representatives raised this urgent matter with the Syrian transitional government?
2. What new action does the European External Action Service intend to take to acquire information about the two journalists and ensure their release, and when will such action be taken?
3. What steps is the European External Action Service taking to ensure the safety of journalists providing independent reporting from Syria, including European journalists?

Submitted: 25.3.2026

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(3 June 2026)

The EU is closely following developments in north-east Syria, including reports of the disappearance of two journalists in Raqqa. Consular assistance to EU citizens remains an exclusive national competence.

The EU consistently recalls that all parties must respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the protection of journalists and the prohibition of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance.

The reported disappearance of these two journalists underscores the broader issue of missing persons across Syria, and the need for efficient investigations. The EU calls on the Syrian transitional authorities to conduct prompt, transparent and impartial investigations into all such cases, in cooperation with the National Commission for Missing Persons as well as relevant international mechanisms, such as the International Commission on Missing Persons and the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The EU will continue to advocate for a safe and enabling environment for independent reporting and media in Syria, in line with international standards, and to support efforts that uphold freedom of expression.

¹ <https://cpj.org/2026/03/german-turkish-journalists-missing-in-syria/>.

² <https://cpj.org/data/people/eva-maria-michelmann/>.