

Women's Rights and Journalism in Syria

Panel on April 6th, 2016 in Berlin

(Invitation in German: www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/presse/termine/termin/frauenrechte-und-journalismus-in-syrien/)

Five years after the onset of protests against the Assad regime in Syria, Reporters Without Borders Germany and Villa Aurora cordially invite you to a panel about women's rights and journalism in Syria.

On the panel:

Yasmine Merei, journalist and human rights activist, editor-in-chief of the women's magazine *Saiedet Souria*

Yahya Alaous, journalist and human rights activist

Dina Aboul Hosn, journalist, author and translator, co-founder of *Abwab*, Germany's first Arab-language newspaper for refugees.

Moderator: **Julia Gerlach**, freelance journalist and author

Time and venue:

Wednesday, April 6th at 7:00 p.m.

in the offices of Reporters Without Borders Germany

Friedrichstraße 231 (2nd back yard, 3rd upper floor)

10969 Berlin

(about halfway between U-Bahn stations Kochstraße and Hallesches Tor).

Women's rights have been a sensitive topic for journalists in Syria for a long time. In some parts of the country extremist Islamic groups severely curtail women's mobility and deny them access to education, enforcing their extremely restrictive vision of gender roles with massive violence. Many refugee women and girls are routinely subjected to sexual violence. Prostitution and forced marriages are part of their sad reality.

The Assad regime, although portraying itself as enlightened and moderate, has overlooked, even long before the start of protests in 2011, the rise of an Islamic-conservative movement. Journalists voicing concern about and reporting on the deficits in women's rights too openly were punished.

The following participants will discuss the challenges that journalists advocating for more women's rights continue to face on a daily basis:

Yasmine Merei: journalist, linguist and human rights activist. Merei worked for several Syrian papers and was co-publisher of *Al-Haqiqa* and *Suwar* magazines. She is the managing editor of the women's magazine *Saiedet Souria* (<http://saiedetsouria.com>) and founding member of

the *Syrian Women's Lobby* and Associate Director of the *Campaign Against Childhood Marriage*. Merei was a Villa Aurora Fellow from June to December 2015.

Yahya Alaous was imprisoned from 2002 to 2004 for his articles critical of the human rights situation in Syria. After his release, he was stripped of his civil and political rights. He continued writing anyway, mostly for *Thara*, a underground weekly e-magazine for women's and children's rights. After the revolution started in 2011, he wrote under for an opposition newspaper under an alias. Eventually he had to leave the country and has been living in Berlin since April 2015. His column about his life as a refugee appears in the online edition of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Dina About Hosn is a journalist, author and translator and member of the coordinating committee of the Syrian Feminist Lobby. A member of the Druze, an oppressed minority, she suffered from ever increasing governmental harassment since the spring of 2011. She moved to Dubai in the fall of 2012 and worked as a reporter for the *Gulf News* there. However, the presence of Syrian secret service agents made her life too dangerous, and she applied for political asylum in Germany. About Hosn is a co-founder of *Abwab*, the first Arab-language paper by and for refugees in Germany (<https://issuu.com/abwab.de>). Dina also works as English-speaking editor for the website *I am a human story* (<http://iamahumanstory.com/en/>).

Julia Gerlach was based in Cairo for seven years and reported on the Arab World from there for German-language media such as *Berliner Zeitung*, *Focus*, *Cicero* and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag*. In 2015 she moved back to Berlin. Her book „Der verpasste Frühling. Woran die Arabellion gescheitert ist“ (“The missed spring. Why the Arab uprising has failed“) was published recently by Ch. Links Verlag.

The panel will be conducted in English.

Please make your reservation at rog@reporter-ohne-grenzen.de

For more information please visit

<https://rsf.org/en/syria/> to learn about RSF's publications about Syria,

<https://rsf.org/en/presentation-0> to learn about RSF's emergency assistance work and

www.villa-aurora.org to learn more about Villa Aurora.

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