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## Journalists Square off over Credibility of Syrian Coverage

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Canadian freelance journalist Eva Bartlett recently made headlines after blasting mainstream news agencies for relying on questionable and unnamed sources.

As the city of eastern Aleppo continues to be liberated by government forces, two journalists covering the conflict engaged in a heated debate hosted by RT, about the credibility of their sources and the West's agenda in Syria.

Among other things, independent Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett questioned the legitimacy of the sources on which UK reporter, Dilly Hussain, and much of the western media, have based their reporting, including the Tweets supposedly coming from a 7-year-old.

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"I'd...like to ask who are the activists that are Tweeting? Is (Hussain) referring to 7-year-old Bana Alabed, who Tweets in English? Not possible for her age(as) she's not a native English speaker," Bartlett said.

Bartlett also questioned Hussain's reliance on the so-called White Helmets, a volunteer-based organization that claims to be impartial, but which she criticized after finding out it receives \$100 million in funding from the United States and the United Kingdom.

"Are those your sources? Who are your credible sources on the ground?" she asked. "They're funded by Western elements that want to topple the Syrian government."

Her comments came about a week after she slammed her mainstream media colleagues during a press conference organized by the Syria Permanent Mission to the United Nations, for relying on secondhand reports from international organizations which she said are simply "not credible" and, in the case of eastern Aleppo, not even there.

Hussain, who repeatedly interrupted Bartlett during her exposition, was quick to dismiss her arguments, calling her a “grade one conspiracy theorist for the Assad and Russian regime.”

“Let’s be serious about this, if you’re rejecting and disbelieving on what’s actually happening on the ground...because some kind of regime, reconciliation group, is claiming that evacuation is being completed, then of course you’re going to accept this kind of propaganda,” Hussain responded. According to him, the Syrian government has not followed through in the agreement struck with opposition militants to evacuate civilians and fighters from the city.

“So I unequivocally reject those claims because we got video evidence, Tweets, from people there,” he added. “You’ve only been hosted by the regime, have not entered any rebel-held areas. And you can’t reject every opposition by calling them Al-Qaeda.”

Bartlett, who’s traveled to Syria several times since 2014, countered that the evacuation of thousands of civilians has been well documented. She then explained that her sources included Syrian and independent journalists, the country’s head of forensic doctors and even civilians who have fled Aleppo.

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“This is documented. And these people are actually saying quite the opposite of what (Hussain) is saying,” she said. “These people said they have tried to escape on prior occasions (and) that they have been violently prevented by the terrorists...(who) were starving them and hoarding food.”

On Monday, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed a resolution requiring U.N. monitors during evacuations from besieged Aleppo.

It called on U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon “to take urgent steps to make arrangements, including security arrangements in consultation with interested parties, to allow the observation by the United Nations and other relevant institutions of the well-being of civilians; inside the eastern districts of the city of Aleppo.”

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said some 20,000 civilians had been evacuated from Aleppo so far.

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