



Arta FM: **independent reporting** in Northern Syria

Friday, March 15, 2019

DONATE

For many years there has been little room for independent media in war-torn Syria. Nonetheless, for six years, in the Kurdish part of Northern Syria radio station Arta FM has been working for more peace and quiet in the region through its independent reporting.

The Kurdish area of Northern Syria where Arta FM is mainly active, has many different population groups, all of which Arta FM wants to serve. To that end, Arta FM broadcasts all its programmes in the four most common languages of the region, so everyone can follow the broadcasts. Opposing extremism and stimulating harmony between the various communities are key goals of Arta FM. For the most part, the radio broadcaster offers its listeners local news and calls into question issues that are ignored by the (local) government. In this way, it promotes the interests of all inhabitants of the region.

Emergency situation

One good example of the importance of Arta FM is its reports on the lax attitude of local government in December, when heavy rainfall and flooding afflicted Jazira region. The damage to the infrastructure and to homes was major. Arta FM immediately received multiple reports from local residents about the negligence and inaccessibility of the local government during this emergency situation. The radio station paid attention to their complaints in different programmes and news broadcasts. During one of the broadcasts, they gave the floor to several victims, who all confirmed that no-one had gotten a response on the municipal emergency number after the flooding. In addition, the municipalities appeared not to have taken enough precautions to limit the damage caused by the heavy rainfall.

Hold the government responsible

For a long time, this was denied by the municipality, but thanks in part to the continued pressure from Arta FM, the official admitted that the insufficient action was taken. Immediately, local emergency committees were established so that in future, the municipality can take better action in future in case of an emergency. Also, during the Arta FM morning show, the deputy mayor announced that two responsible officials had been fired on the spot.

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Free Press Unlimited has supported Arta FM since the beginning of 2018, not only financially but also operationally. The radio station underwent a growth spurt over the last couple of years and was therefore really able to put the support from Free Press Unlimited to good use. Last year, for example, we gave various journalism and organisational training to the editing team and the management of the radio station. In addition, Free Press Unlimited helps Arta FM to safeguard the quality of the programmes by giving regular feedback and tips about the content of the programmes.

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