

# 'Mainstream Media Is Lying' in Syria Coverage. Eva Bartlett in Montreal

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Global Research, February 02, 2017

[The McGill Tribune](#) 31 January 2017

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Terrorism](#),

[US NATO War Agenda](#)

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*On Jan. 28, the freelance and sometimes [controversial](#) Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett spoke at the Montreal Delta Hotel. The event was part of her nationwide [tour](#) on the Syrian Civil War and alleged misreporting by Western media. Bartlett, whose work has been published on independent watchdog journalism website MintPress News, focused on events in Aleppo from the perspective of her own journalistic experiences there and was accompanied by President and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization, Michel Chossudovsky, and author Yves Engler. The event was sponsored by the Canadian Peace Congress and the Syria Solidarity Movement.*

The talk commenced with remarks from Chossudovsky, followed by a discussion of incidents, which according to Bartlett, the mainstream media did not accurately report on or cover at all.



Alex Gardiner / The McGill Tribune

"Syrian voices weren't being heard in the corporate media," Bartlett said. "I wanted to concentrate on hearing what they had been living."

Originally from Ontario, Bartlett lived in Gaza from 2008 to 2013, and has travelled to Syria a total of six times since April 2014. She speaks colloquial Arabic, which helped her to interview residents of Aleppo. Bartlett emphasized the importance of on-the-ground reporting, which she claims Western media, including *BBC* and *Al Jazeera* has failed to adequately do. Instead, she and the other panel speakers said that the media is playing a role in spreading propaganda.

"Most governments, in times of war, engage in propaganda," Engler said, referring to a staged video of a civilian rescue that many news sources, including [CNN](#) mistakenly believed to be real.

The video was produced by the Syria Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets, a group of volunteer search and rescue workers who were recently nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for their work in Syria.

The panelists expressed their discontent with corporate media and claimed that major newspapers and news networks are feeding the public inaccurate information. Concerning

Aleppo, a city at the centre of the Syrian Civil War and the battle against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Bartlett and her colleagues insisted that the public is not getting the true story.

According to Bartlett, most news coverage regarding Syrian conflict focuses on the civilian battle against Bashar al-Assad's regime, while widely ignoring the role of rebel groups in instigating violent attacks.

"This revolution has been targeting civilians and infrastructure," Bartlett said. "Ask yourselves, 'What kind of a revolution does that?'"

Chossudovsky added that any government—including the United States and its allies—involved in aiding rebel groups fighting Assad is part of an illegal war. According to Chossudovsky, humanitarian efforts in the form of military interventions are nothing but an insurgency.

"U.S. media disinformation is complicit in this war [by] portraying this war as a humanitarian undertaking," Chossudovsky said.

Ultimately, Bartlett made the argument that rebel groups are to blame for the decay of Aleppo. She did not comment on the role played by Assad and the government.

Though Bartlett was received with praise from the audience, she has previously faced backlash and accusations from other journalists, among them Deputy Editor of *5PillarsUK* Dilly Hussain, who [debated](#) with Bartlett on Dec. 16, 2016 and accused her of being a propagandist for the Syrian and Russian governments—a claim that she has [denied](#).

McGill Department of Political Science Professor Rex Brynen wrote in an email to *The McGill Tribune* that he does not agree with Bartlett's claims about the spread of inaccurate information about the Syrian civil war. Brynen's research focuses on the politics in the Middle East, international development, and security.

"[...] I think Eva Bartlett has been fairly effectively discredited as a regime apologist," Brynen wrote. "I think there's been pretty substantial coverage of rebel human rights violations, and frankly the mainstream press coverage is pretty good. Moreover, none of that takes away from the massive human rights violations carried out by the regime."

Bartlett's Canada tour will continue through Feb. 3, where she will end in Regina, Saskatchewan.

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