



Sureya Hassari

THE BRAIDED RESISTANCE

Turning News into a Shield for civilians in Rojava



THE CRISIS

In January 2026, renewed internal conflict erupted across Rojava, Northeast Syria, affecting Kurdish areas. Armed confrontations and extremist violence triggered a massive humanitarian crisis, forcing thousands of women, children, and the elderly to flee amid fears of ethnic cleansing.

In response, AVA Media launched an immediate, continuous crisis communication campaign led by senior anchor Suraya Hassari, herself originally from Rojava, Syria.

For the entire month of January, AVA Media aired daily 6-7 hour crisis broadcasts, creating the primary communication bridge between affected civilians, decision-makers, humanitarian actors, and international audiences.

More than 200 hours of continuous coverage transformed journalism into visibility — and visibility into measurable humanitarian impact.



A DAUGHTER OF ROJAVA: SUREYA HESSARI

• A Personal Journey

Leading this effort was senior anchor Suraya Hassari, herself a daughter of Rojava whose own family has been displaced five times. During the escalation, she refused to watch from the safety of a studio; instead, she returned to her homeland at the heart of the conflict to stand with her community and give the invincible a voice.

• Reporting Under Fire:

Suraya reported from the frontlines in Derk, Rumayla, Qamishlo, and Hasaka. Her presence in shelters and schools was a direct act of defiance in a region where women are often silenced.

• Courage Amidst Threats

Her reporting drew severe, credible death threats confirmed by security authorities. Despite receiving explicit text messages and social media warnings to leave or face fatal consequences, she stayed.

BEYOND THE NEWSROOM

Courage on the Frontlines

AVA Media chose to become a shield for the vulnerable. For thirty days, we turned our newsroom into a 24/7 crisis communication room,

1. The 200 Hour Marathon

Daily 6-7 hour live crisis programs providing real-time updates and open phone lines for civilians and displaced people.

2. Civilian-Centered Information

Interviews with families fleeing conflict, conversations with doctors, teachers, and local leaders to counter misinformation.

3. Humanitarian Pressure

Using on-air interviews with political leaders to demand the opening of humanitarian corridors and amplifying civilian demands.

4. The "Kazi" Moment: Symbolic Resistance

When extremists attempted to humiliate Kurdish women by cutting their hair braids known in Kurdish as (Kazi), Suraya braided her hair live on-air. She declared: "If you cut one, we will braid a thousand more." An act meant to intimidate women became a symbol of collective strength.



FROM VISIBILITY TO HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

AVA Media's mission and coverage became a humanitarian lifeline Through sustained live coverage and on-air pressure:

- Humanitarian corridors were opened.
- Siege conditions were reduced.

In collaboration with the Barzani Charity Foundation, we turned media pressure and views into life-saving relief for 25,829 families



410

truckloads of aid were delivered to Rojava



104,492

hot meals were distributed



360,245

liters of heating oil reached families



25,829

families benefited



8,707

people received medical treatment



1,329

job opportunities were created



SCALE OF DIGITAL IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

The story resonated across every digital frontier, reaching over 2 billion total views:



1,300,000 VIEWS



367,000,000 VIEWS



301,000,000 VIEWS



31,000,000 VIEWS



10,000,000 VIEWS



AVA Media and Sureya Hassari transformed news into protection - and protection into measurable human impact.

We turned digital platforms into a humanitarian corridor, ensuring a displaced minority was never invisible.

This is the power of a woman who refused to be silenced, turning two billion views into a lifeline for her people.



The Braided Resistance:
Turning News into a Shield for Civilians in Rojava, Syria

Shorty Awards 2026 Entry
Local Campaign Category