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State media: Syrian TV reporter killed near Qusayr



A reporter for Syrian state television has been killed while covering an army assault on the rebel stronghold of Qusayr, state media said on Monday. "The ministry of information... announces that colleague Yara Abbas has been added to the ranks of the martyrs, killed by terrorists near Dabaa airport," north of Qusayr, state media said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights watchdog also reported the death of Abbas who worked for state television news channel Al-Ikhbariya, saying she "was killed by a sniper close to Dabaa airport." The group said other members of Abbas's crew were wounded, without providing further details. Information Minister Omran al-Zohbi, interviewed on Syrian television, described Abbas's death as "tragic" and called her a "martyr." "This is a new sacrifice by the Syrian media so that Syria will remain and will return better than before," he said. He expressed the hope that "Yara will be the last of the martyrs in a bleeding Syria." "Yara was aware that she could die a martyr and she shed her blood for Syria," he added. Before her death, Reporters sans Frontieres said 23 journalists had been killed in Syria since the beginning of the uprising in March 2011. At least 58 citizen journalists have been killed in the conflict. The Syrian army, backed by fighters from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, began an assault on the rebel stronghold of Qusayr on Sunday May 19. Both the rebels and the regime view the town in central Homs province as a key strategic prize, because it lies near the Lebanese border and by the road connecting Damascus to the coast.