



'Fake News' Reporter at Der Spiegel Could Face Charges for Embezzlement of Funds Meant for Syrian Orphans

Germany: Claas Relotius, a journalist with *Der Spiegel*, was caught writing made-up stories, and his editor never fact-checked his articles. His work had received awards from CNN. He wrote negative reports about President Trump and fabricated [propaganda](#) stories that made Americans appear racist and xenophobic. For example, he wrote about seeing a hand-painted sign in a town in Minnesota that read: "Mexicans Keep Out," but the sign did not exist. According to *Der Spiegel*, Relotius admitted deceiving readers in 14 stories.

Der Spiegel also received messages from readers saying Relotius was using a private email account to ask for donations to help Syrian orphans in Turkey. It is believed that the story he wrote is mostly fiction, and that he pocketed donations meant for the children. He is expected to be investigated for embezzlement. -GEG

The German reporter Claas Relotius, accused by top news magazine *Der Spiegel* of faking stories, could now face embezzlement charges.

Der Spiegel says it is filing a criminal complaint alleging he solicited donations for Syrian orphans from readers with any proceeds going to his personal account.

Der Spiegel said last week that Relotius admitted faking some stories.

The reporter, 33, has yet to comment on the embezzlement allegations.

In the latest development, [Der Spiegel reports \(in German\)](#) that it received messages from readers saying Relotius had used a private email account to ask for donations to help Syrian orphans in Turkey.

The money should be sent to his personal bank account, the magazine quotes readers as saying.

The publication says it is not yet clear what sort of response he received – how much money was collected or where it ended up.

Der Spiegel is gathering evidence to pass on to prosecutors.

- [IGN sacks writer amid plagiarism controversy](#)
- [ABC boss quits over political interference claims](#)

Relotius' appeal for donations was linked to [an article he wrote about two Syrian street-children, a brother and sister, in Turkey – parts of which Der Spiegel says were faked.](#)

A Turkish photographer who accompanied Relotius on the story said the reporter had made up some aspects of the boy's life and heavily fictionalised others.

The photographer suspects that the sister may not have existed at all.

'Institutional bias'

The American ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, has also intervened, writing to Der Spiegel's editor to demand an independent investigation and accusing the publication of institutional bias against the US.

Like many publications, Der Spiegel has carried stories critical of President Donald Trump.

One of the Relotius stories at issue centred on the US-Mexican border. Der Spiegel said its investigation revealed that he had fabricated information about seeing a hand-painted sign in a town in Minnesota that read: "Mexicans Keep Out."

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