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Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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Significant increase in hate speech and hate crimes against Protestant Christians in Turkey

Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey publishes annual human rights report

(Bonn, 10.07.2024) The Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey has presented its annual “Human Rights – Violation Report” which now was published by the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF).

Despite the fundamental guarantee of religious freedom in the Turkish constitution, there were still “significant problems facing the Protestant church community” in 2023. This does not mean that there are no problems for Turkey’s other Christian communities, such as the Orthodox and Catholic communities. However, according to the authors, they only have the relevant expertise for the Protestant churches. As of the end of 2023, 205 Protestant congregations are known. The human rights report is based on their experiences.

The report lists a whole series of examples of “hate crimes and hate speech, verbal and physical attacks”, which have increased significantly in number compared to the previous year. To name a few examples: A pastor was beaten by a person during a sermon to – according to him – “test how tolerant Christians were”. Churches or buildings used by Christian communities were repeatedly attacked, e. g. by smashing windows. Christians have been verbally threatened and intimidated – simply because they are Christians. Even the staff of Christian churches who provided concrete help in the earthquake regions, e. g. by distributing meals, were insulted as

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Evangelical Missiology, Journal of missiopot – Evangelical Forum for Missions, Cultures and Religions (German Evangelical Alliance) missiopot.org

Evangelical Review of Theology (New York, Bonn) theology.worlddea.org/evangelical-review-of-theology

Giving Hands – International Charity (Bonn) gebende-haende.de

Institut für Islamfragen der Deutschen, Schweizer und Österreichischen Allianz (IfI) islaminstitut.de

International Institute for Islamic Studies (IIS) (Bonn) islamistitute.net

International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) (Bonn, Vancouver, San José – Costa Rica) iirf.global

International Journal for Religious Freedom (IJRF) (Bonn/Toronto) ijrf.org

International Secretariat of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) ishr.org

Islam and Christianity journal.islaminstitut.net

Martin Bucer Seminary (Bonn, Zürich, Tirana, São Paulo, Helsinki, Istanbul, Delhi) bucer.org

SOS World (Brussels) sosworld.be/page-daccueil

Theological Commission of the European Evangelical Alliance europeanea.org

Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft (VKW) (Culture and Science Publ.) vkwonline.com

WEA book series: Global Issues Series / World of Theology Series theology.worlddea.org/global-issues
theology.worlddea.org/world-of-theology

WEA Sustainability Center wea-sc.org

Yearbook on Religious Freedom of the Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance yearbooks.iirf.eu



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“specially trained employees”. Fortunately, however, the selfless efforts of many Christians in disaster relief have been recognised and appreciated by both the victims and the authorities.

As in previous years, a major human rights problem is the situation of foreign Christian leaders or their spouses. Even though there has been a fundamentally positive shift towards Turkish pastors as church leaders in recent years, there are still churches that are led by foreign Christians, as there are simply not enough local leaders and the number of churches is constantly increasing. Since 2019, as at the end of 2023, a total of 113 people have been affected who have received a “code” and have therefore already had to leave the country or would actually be obliged to leave the country as they no longer have a valid residence permit. Including family members, this now affects 250 people! Quite a few of those affected have been given the code G-87, as this person is a danger to public safety.

There is also such a case in the context of the Martin Bucer Seminary. Although the family won a court case in 2023, the competent authority refuses to issue the residence permit to which they are entitled, contrary to the court decision. The person in question told BQ: “It feels like you're in an action film 24/7. You're constantly energised. You could be stopped by the police at any time – and then you don't have a valid residence permit.”

But there are also still unanswered questions in the areas of legal registration of congregations, church buildings, training of pastors, religious education in schools and others. The report also makes some recommendations in this regard.

The Association of Protestant Churches is the Evangelical Alliance of Turkey. It started in 1989 with a meeting of church leaders as the “Representative Council”, which transformed into the “Association of Protestant Churches” and finally became an official association on 23 January 2009.

Downloads and Links:

- 2023 Human Rights – Violation Report: <https://iirf.global/publications/reports/2023-human-rights-violation-report/>

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