

**International Conference on Religious Freedom**  
**Freie Theologische Hochschule Gießen – Chair of Religious Freedom**

Thema: **Religious Freedom: Normative Basis – Actual State – Resulting Challenges**

Datum: **13.02.2025-14.02.2025 (Thu./Fri.)**

Tagungsort: Freie Theologische Hochschule Gießen, Rathenaustraße 5-7, 35394 Gießen, Germany

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**Conference Programme**

**Thursday, 13.02.2025**

- 11.00 am **Welcome** (german)  
Organisational information (Kauder, Holthaus, Giesbrecht)
- Greeting** (german)  
*Prof. Dr. mult. Thomas Schirrmacher*  
President of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF), Costa Rica/Bonn
- 11.20 am-1.00 pm **Plenary: Religious freedom - normative basis, political controversies, multiple violations** (german)  
*Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Heiner Bielefeldt*  
Professor of Human Rights and Human Rights Policy, Friedrich-Alexander Universität, Erlangen-Nürnberg  
Discussion
- 1.15 pm Lunch
- 2.30-3.30 pm **Plenary: Identity politics – A threat to religious freedom?** (german)  
*Prof. Dr. Christoph Raedel*  
Professor of Systematic Theology, Freie Theologische Hochschule, Gießen  
Discussion

3.45 pm

Coffee break

4.30-6.00 pm	<p>Session 1</p> <p>Room: Lecture room 1/2</p> <p>David Giesbrecht</p>	<p>Session 2</p> <p>Room: Chapel</p> <p>Dr. Carsten Polanz</p>	<p>Session 3</p> <p>Room: Lecture room 3</p> <p>Dr. Meiken Buchholz</p>
4.30-5.10 pm	<p><b>Dr. Tatiana Kopaleishvili:</b> Religious Freedom in the Post-Soviet Space – Trends, Challenges, Prospects (english)</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p><b>Prof. Dr mult. Thomas Schirmacher:</b> Religious freedom for Jews in the face of religious extremism in Islam, Judaism and Christianity (german)</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p><b>Dr. Daniel Ottenberg:</b> Modi's third presidential term – what does it mean for Indian Christians? (german)</p> <p>Discussion</p>
5.15-6.00 pm	<p><b>Prof. Augustin Sawadogo:</b> Weak States and Religious Freedom in a Context of Terrorism – Actual State and Resulting Challenges in Burkina Faso as an example in the Sahel Region. (english)</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p><b>Dr. Daniel Röthlisberger:</b> Help and self-help for persecuted Christians – New Testament impulses (german)</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p><b>Dr. Meiken Buchholz:</b> Restricting Religious Freedom in the Name of Patriotism – The Current Discourse on 'Becoming Chinese' the Church of the Republic of China (german)</p> <p>Discussion</p>

6.00 -7.00 pm

Dinner

7.15-9.00 pm

**Q&A: Personal experiences** (english)

Moderation: David Giesbrecht

Dr. Yassir Eric

Dr. Anna Hampton

Prof. Dr mult. Thomas Schirmacher

**Music:** Werner Hucks

## **Freitag, 14.02.2025**

9.00 am **Morning devotion** (Markus Rode and Team, OpenDoors Germany)

9.30-11.00 am **Plenary: Monitoring challenges and undetected religious freedom violations** (english)

*Dr. Dennis P. Petri*

Direktor des International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF), Costa Rica/Bonn

11.15 am Coffee break

11.30 am-1.00 pm	Session 1 Room: Lecture room 1/2 David Giesbrecht	Session 2 Room: Chapel Dr. Carsten Polanz	Session 3 Room: Lecture room 3 Dr. Meiken Buchholz
11.30 am-12.10 pm	<b>Prof. Dr. Janet E. Buckingham:</b> The Big Chill – When neutrality of the state becomes exclusion of the church (english)  Discussion	<b>Dr. Carsten Polanz:</b> The Future of Religious Freedom in the Public Sphere – Inner-Muslim Controversies about Secularity and Secularism in Germany (german)  Discussion	<b>Dr. Anna Hampton:</b> Theology of Risk and Shrewdness in Hostile Environments. An Integrated Approach (english)  Discussion
12.15-1.00 pm	<b>Elizabeth Francis:</b> Religious expressions and the law – where should the line be in managing so-called 'hateful' religious speech? (english)  Discussion	<b>Dr. Yassir Eric:</b> Conversion in a Muslim context (german)  Discussion	<b>Dr. Ronald Boyd-MacMillan:</b> "Built First With Words" - A seven element template on how persecution creeps into then controls a culture, with special reference to India today. (english)  Discussion

1.15 pm

Lunch

2.30-4.00 pm

**Plenary: Religious freedom in the Islamic world – positions from society, theology and politics** (german)

*Prof. Dr. Christine Schirrmacher*

Professor of Islamic Studies at the Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies,  
Department of Islamic Studies and Middle Eastern Languages,  
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn

Discussion

4.15 pm

Coffee break

4.30-5.30 pm

**"First the cross, then the crown": Martyrdom and resilience as core elements of the Christian faith** (german)

*Prof. Dr. Stephan Holthaus*

Rector and Professor of Christian Ethics and Apologetics, Freie Theologische Hochschule, Giessen

**Religious freedom: Problematic reality! Difficult future?** (german)

*Prof. Volker Kauder*

Honorary Professor of Religious Freedom and Political Ethics, Freie Theologische Hochschule, Gießen

5.30 pm

Conclusion and outcome of the conference

5.45 pm

Dinner