

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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BQ 915 – No. 20/2026

Speech marking the 15th anniversary of the “Mission Freedom” safe houses

Speech against (forced) prostitution: “Women are increasingly being treated as commodities”

(Bonn, 25.03.2026) Thomas Schirmmacher, a human rights expert specializing in religious freedom and in human trafficking, had the privilege of delivering the keynote speech at the 15th anniversary celebrations of Mission Freedom. He helped establish the organization 15 years ago, in part through his book “Human Trafficking,” an publication of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR). Mission Freedom runs safe houses for girls and women escaping forced prostitution. Several of those freed now work at Mission Freedom, and they thanked Gaby Wentland, whose vision to fight forced prostitution remains the driving force of the organization, as well as Thomas Schirmmacher. The event took place near Frankfurt, close to the legal seat of ISHR.



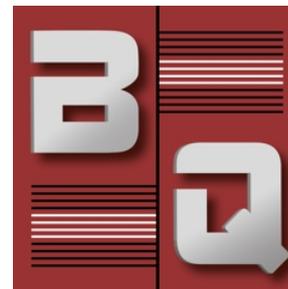
Thomas Schirmmacher giving the keynote © Mission Freedom

Mission Freedom operates shelters for girls and women who have escaped forced prostitution. Some of those who have been rescued now work at Mission Freedom and expressed their gratitude to Gaby Wentland, whose vision in the fight against forced prostitution remains the driving force behind the organization, as well as to Thomas Schirmmacher. Mission Freedom e. V., which has been working against human trafficking and forced prostitution since 2011, celebrated its 15th anniversary on January 31, 2026. The celebrations took place in Frankfurt, not far from the ISHR headquarters, and were extensively documented by the organization itself on social media.

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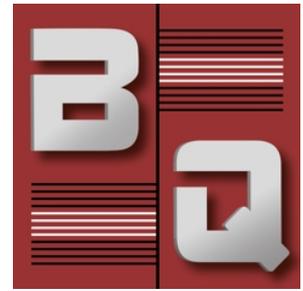
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Founded on January 1, 2011, by Gaby Wentland, the association has specialized in four pillars: education, exit assistance, prevention, and networking. Social media posts describe the anniversary event as a moment “full of courage, hope, and real change,” with thanks to supporters and a look ahead to future work. Instagram and Facebook posts feature emotional reflections: Former colleagues attended the event, and videos highlight 15 years of transformation.

Schirmmacher recalled his opening speeches at the Safe House in Hamburg in 2011 and the Safe House in Frankfurt in 2018. In addition, there has been a Safe House for children in the Allgäu region since 2024. To date, 126 women have successfully left the industry, along with 36 children. Schirmmacher also reported on his global efforts against prostitution and human trafficking, for which he visited dozens of countries in 2025, including Mauritania, the Comoros, Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, Togo, Saudi Arabia, Guyana, Jamaica, Chile, and Lithuania, spoke with the presidents of Lebanon, Cape Verde, Senegal, and Guinea-Bissau, and met with ministers in countries such as Mali, Syria, the UAE, Israel, the U.S., and Panama.



Thomas Schirmmacher with the staff of Mission Freedom running safe houses all over Europe © Mission Freedom

According to a 2021 study by the French Ministry of Health, 7,000–10,000 minors, predominantly girls but also boys, are working in prostitution in France, Schirmmacher says. In Germany, the number is said to be higher, but recent studies are lacking. Where aid organizations have access, they find that at least 90 % of minors have experienced sexual violence within their immediate or extended family. UNICEF estimates there are three to four million underage sex workers, while researchers estimate 10 million. Schirmmacher asked: “What is being done to address such egregious abuses, in which terrible crimes—such as forced labor, torture, deprivation of liberty, and the ongoing rape of minors—accumulate?”

The association Mission Freedom e. V. also provides outpatient care for women and visits former sex workers in their homes. Several teams conduct street outreach weekly in Hamburg and Frankfurt, visiting well over 100 women in the red-light district.

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Training sessions are held annually at schools, universities, the German Armed Forces, the police, and for local communities. Training for street workers, beginners, and teams wishing to open a shelter is readily offered and has been frequently utilized. Online streetworker training is also available.

“Women are increasingly being turned into commodities” (Two excerpts from the speech)

1. Violent pornography as a precursor to (forced) prostitution

While politicians and often universities indulge in lofty statements, a steadily increasing brutalization of pornography is taking place on the internet and social media, teaching young people who have never even kissed a girl that women are only there to give men an orgasm and to be at their beck and call. The so-called “rape myth”—that women have rape fantasies and become aroused during acts of violence against them—is more pervasive than ever. In 2008, I warned in my German and Russian book “Internet Pornography” that the increasing violence against women on the internet would spill over into reality. The terrible things I cited back then must be described as “softcore sex” in light of the reality on the internet in 2026. Various studies show that 90 % of all pornographic films contain violence in all its forms. A recent study shows that 88 % of porn actors were sexually abused as children; similar findings have been reported frequently. A 2021 report by the UK’s school inspectorate concluded that 73 % of female students reported that erotic images of them had been circulated against their will. AI has made everything even worse; “X” currently offers a service that allows anyone to be turned into porn using AI. ClothOff is the most widely used of these apps; 99 % of the images created with it depict women.



Thomas Schirmacher thanks Gaby Wendtland for her work © Mission Freedom

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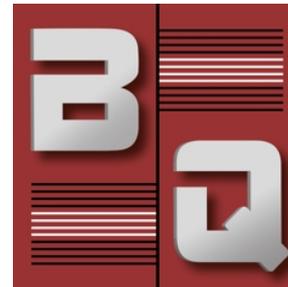
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In 2024, Reuters revealed in a series of articles based on investigative reporting that many of the girls who strip for money on OnlyFans are being forced and terrorized by pimps.

As a result, the number of pedophiles who do not directly abuse children is also rising —proof that the internet not only caters to biological greed that has existed for centuries but also creates new forms of greed on a massive scale. Further evidence of this is that pornography from 30 years ago leaves today's pornography users largely unmoved.

People today have more sex alone but less and less sex with a partner; erectile dysfunction among young men is increasing year after year. This leads to increasingly extreme use of pornography, but also to more frequent sex with prostitutes, who are forced into perverse acts that one could hardly expect from a normal partner. The number of men under 40 with erectile dysfunction has increased tenfold since 2010, from approximately 3 % to approximately 30 %.

2. The Nordic Model: Punishing the Clients, Not the Sex Workers

In 2023, the European Parliament fortunately endorsed the so-called Nordic Model, under which clients are punished, not sex workers, by approving Maria Noichl's own-initiative report. This step by the European Parliament also emphatically underscores the clear position that prostitution must be regarded as a form of violence against women. Three findings of the report deserve special emphasis:

1. Increase in violence: Sex workers experience violence and exploitation more frequently than the general population. Studies show that many of them experience physical or sexual violence.

2. Human trafficking: It is not possible to strictly separate prostitution from human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, as women and children in particular are trafficked for sexual exploitation in the vast majority of cases. Worldwide, 64 % of those affected for the purpose of sexual exploitation are women and 27 % are girls. In Germany, 95.2 % of those affected are female.

3. Demand: Prostitution and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation exist because there is a demand for paid sex. The decriminalization of the purchase of sexual services increases demand and promotes exploitation.

On July 25, 2024, the European Court of Human Rights announced its judgment in the case of M.A. and Others v. France (No. 63664/19), because 261 individuals working in prostitution, supported by numerous non-governmental organizations, asked the Court to condemn France for its 2016 legislation based on the Nordic Model. The ECtHR confirmed that the French state does not violate human rights with its abolitionist model.

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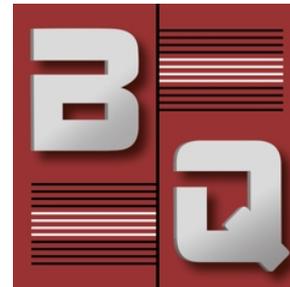
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On the other hand, on October 3, 2024, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) was on the verge of adopting a draft resolution titled “Protection of Human Rights and Improvement of Living Conditions of Sex Workers and Victims of Sexual Exploitation” (Report 16044), which advocated for the full decriminalization of prostitution. The relevant PACE committee met at the end of 2024 and decided by a majority to discontinue work on the resolution.

However, the entire affair also highlights the enormous tensions between two camps within the UN Human Rights Council, where two special rapporteurs are actively pitted against one another. In the case of *M.A. and Others v. France*, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health (Tlaleng Mofokeng) voluntarily intervened in the proceedings before the



Media frenzy during the event © Mission Freedom

ECtHR to defend the liberalization of “sex work,” while the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls (Reem Alsalem) vehemently advocated the opposite, namely the abolitionist model.

The campaign before the ECHR and PACE bears the hallmarks of the militant international lobbying—heavily funded by billionaire George Soros’s Open Society Foundations—carried out by many non-governmental organizations in favor of the liberalization of prostitution.

Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1** and **Photo 2**: Thomas Schirmmacher giving the keynote © Mission Freedom
- **Photo 3**: Thomas Schirmmacher with the staff of Mission Freedom running safe houses all over Europe © Mission Freedom
- **Photo 4**: Thomas Schirmmacher thanks Gaby Wentland for her work © Mission Freedom
- **Photo 5**: Media frenzy during the event © Mission Freedom
- Mission Freedom website: <https://mission-freedom.de/en/>
- Thomas Schirmmacher “Human Trafficking – The Return of Slavery”: <https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=13226>
- Thomas Schirmmacher “The Oppression of Women: Violence – Exploitation – Poverty”: <https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=10659>

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