

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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BQ 916 – No. 21/2026

Beirut International Conference on Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue for Sustainability

(Bonn, 01.04.2026) Upon the special request of the President of Lebanon, Joseph Aoun, the President and the Secretary General of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), Thomas Schirmacher and Matthias Böhning, participated in the first-ever Beirut International Conference on Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue for Sustainability.

The conference was organised by the Lebanese One Voice Foundation, which is connected to the Royal Ghassanid Academy of Arts and Science, whose President Schirmacher is, as well as by the Faith for Earth Initiative of the United Nations and the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) in Beirut. The conference, held under the patronage of HE General Joseph



Thomas Schirmacher addresses Sunni and Catholic leaders of Lebanon © BQ

Aoun, President of the Republic of Lebanon, whom Schirmacher and Böhning had visited earlier visit to prepare the conference, took place in the John Paul II Amphitheater at the Holy Spirit University.

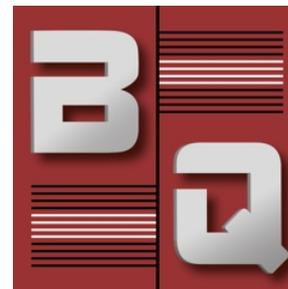
The conference took up a resolution passed by the United Nations in 2019 to make Lebanon a platform for dialogue between civilisations and cultures. It emphasised the country's unique history, which has been shaped by a wide variety of cultures and religions over the past centuries, making it a central location for the contested concept of so-called "coexistence."

The programme began with a visionary panel on the topic of "Lebanon as a Hub for Dialogue and Sustainability." After the lunch break, ISHR President Schirmacher

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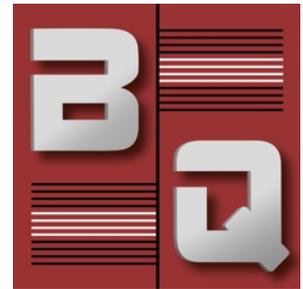
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spoke on “The Covenant of Coexistence: How Diversity and Faith Forge a Sustainable Future,” to which the Advisor to the President of the Lebanese Republic for Human Rights and Interfaith Dialogue, Habib Afram, also contributed.

In his address, Schirmmacher spoke to the Grand Mufti of Lebanon, Abdul Latif Derian, and his two deputies, who were seated directly in front of him and with whom he held a discussion afterwards. He also addressed the different Catholic bishops and leaders, as well as the President of the (Papal) Holy Spirit University. He reminded them of their huge responsibility in representing two large religious communities in Lebanon. He emphasised that conflict between religious leaders, even verbal conflict, would be devastating for the country. However, if they were to engage in dialogue and cooperate despite their theological differences, as they had done by being present, then Lebanon would have a future.



The ISHR President had last met his counterpart in the panel, Mr Afram in person on the eve of his trip to Syria. Mr Afram, who is also President of the Syriac League, is a proven and globally recognised expert on the situation of Christian minorities in the Middle East. Against this backdrop, the President and the Secretary General discussed the potential for closer cooperation on the sidelines of the conference, including the idea of an Observatory for Human Rights and Freedom of Religion and Belief for the MENA region.

Thomas Schirmmacher speaks with Lebanon's Grand Mufti Abdul Latif Derian and his deputies after his lecture © BQ

Other important meetings and discussions took place with the following dignitaries:

- Father Prof Georges Hobeika, Vicar General of the Lebanese Maronite Order (OLM) (an intellectual with a wealth of historical, theological, and philosophical knowledge)
- HE Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Jarwan, President of the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace from the United Arab Emirates
- Hs Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan
- Dr Ibrahim Saleh Al Naimi, Minister of Education, Qatar
- Dr Iyad AbuMoghli, CEO, Faith for Earth Initiative, UNEP
- Dr Waseem Haddad, Director of the Arab Region, KACIID
- Dr Laure Abi Khalil, Middle East Council of Churches
- Hussam Zaki, Assistant Secretary General, Arab League

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Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1:** Thomas Schirmmacher addresses Sunni and Catholic leaders of Lebanon © BQ
- **Photo 2:** Thomas Schirmmacher speaks with Lebanon's Grand Mufti Abdul Latif Derian and his deputies after his lecture © BQ
- **Photo 3:** The front row with representatives of the Sunnis, Shiites, Christians, and the government – Beirut © BQ International Conference on Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue © BQ
- **Photo 4:** The speakers and program organisers of the Beirut International Conference on Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue © BQ
- **Photo 5:** First row sitting beside the representative of the Muslim World League and the Advisor of the President of Lebanon © BQ
- **Photo 6:** One of the organisers, the One Voice Foundation representing the Royal House of Ghassan © BQ
- **Photo 7:** Thomas Schirmmacher and Matthias Böhning with the Grand Mufti of Lebanon Abdul Latif Derian and his wife © BQ
- Photo gallery of the conference: <https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=24841>
- BQ 871 – 51/2025 “Schirmmacher received by Joseph Aoun, President of the Republic of Lebanon”: <https://bonn-profiles.net/?p=9230>
- BQ 872 – 52/2025 “Meeting to strengthen Christians in the Middle East”: <https://bonn-profiles.net/?p=9243>

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