

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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BQ 921 – No. 26/2026

Thomas Schirmmacher was honoured by the Fjellhaug International University College in Oslo and the IIRF

The laudation by Professor Sauer and the nine theses from Schirmmacher's lecture on his life's learning are now available

(Bonn, 28.04.2026) In September 2025, Thomas Schirmmacher was honoured for his lifetime achievements in the field of freedom of religion or belief, as a gift for his 65th birthday. The honour included:

- A welcome address by Ketil Jensen, Rector of Fjellhaug International University College in Oslo.
- A laudation by Christof Sauer, accompanied by a commemorative photo album documenting the history of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF).
- A certificate of appreciation from Prof. Dr. Dennis Petri in recognition of 20 years of service to IIRF.
- An invitation for Schirmmacher to give a honorary guest lecture on his lifelong engagement with religious freedom and what he has learnt from it;
- The launch of the anthology Religious Persecution and Theological/Missiological Education, published by FIUC and IIRF in Schirmmacher's publishing house, VKW.



Honorary Guest lecture by Thomas Schirmmacher at Fjellhaug International University College in Oslo © IIRF



A joint platform for the following Bonn organizations on the basis of the Evangelical Alliance:

Bonn Abrahamic Center for Global Justice, Peace and Sustainability

Business Coalition of the World Evangelical Alliance (Bonn, Hamburg) business.worlddea.org

Evangelical Missiology, Journal of missiotop – Evangelical Forum for Missions, Cultures and Religions (Evangelical Alliance in Germany) missiotop.org

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

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WEA Sustainability Center wea-sc.org

Yearbook Persecution and Discrimination of Christians and Yearbook Religious Freedom iirf.global/jahrbuch

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All this took place during a symposium “Religious Persecution and Theological/Missiological Education” at Fjellhaug International University College (FIUC) in Oslo, co organised with the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF).

Laudation

Meanwhile Professor Sauer published the power point presentation of his laudation, as well as bullet points of his laudation:

<https://bonner-querschnitte.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Oslo-Schirmmacher-introduction.pdf>

Certificate

This is the text of the certificate from IIRF: “In recognition of 20 years of outstanding service, visionary leadership, and unwavering dedication to the mission of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF). Your tireless efforts in advancing academic excellence, defending freedom of religion or belief, and building bridges across disciplines, regions, and faiths have left a lasting legacy. Through your founding role and two decades of commitment, the IIRF has grown into a global platform for research, advocacy, and impact. With deep gratitude and admiration, we honor your exemplary contributions and lifelong pursuit of justice and human dignity.”



Honouring Thomas Schirmmacher 20 Years of IIRF – International Symposium at Fjellhaug International University College in Oslo © IIRF

<https://bonner-querschnitte.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/IIRF-Certificate-of-Appeal-for-Thomas-Schirmmacher.jpg>

Honorary guest lecture: Nine thesis

Also Professor Schirmmacher published the nine theses of his special lecture and the power point going with it, under the title “Integrating insights from various disciplines into research and education on the persecution of Christians and freedom of religion or belief for all – Lessons from My Life’s Journey”.

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This paper is a call to Christian scholars in all relevant fields of academic research to engage in religious freedom studies and to join this growing global community of scholars.

But it is also a call to Christian scholars to collaborate with scholars of all faiths or none, and to present the results of their research in such a way that they can be shared and discussed with any scholar of good will around the world, also making them accessible for media, governments, and parliaments, which usually represent a mix of worldviews.

Examples will be given from fields in which the speaker himself has been involved globally over the past four decades, such as systematic theology, political ethics, cultural anthropology, sociology of religion, historical studies, and interreligious dialogue.

1. The idea of religious freedom originated from religious minorities within Christianity since 1641 and from the minority of Jews since 1783.
2. Therefore, Christians and Jews must confidently participate in the global promotion and implementation of this idea, even though it is now shared by people of all religions and beliefs as part of the canon of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
3. The study of persecution and martyrdom must find its way back to the heart of Christian systematic theology and become an integral part of every subject of theological studies, e.g. Christology, ecclesiology, church history, ethics, missiology or pastoral care.
4. This must happen in cooperation with all churches, as we all believe in the foremost martyr, Jesus himself, we need to learn from the Eastern churches in general, as well as from their experience with persecution. We must also acknowledge that persecutors rarely care what kind of Christian they persecute or martyr.
5. The same applies to the broader question of freedom of religion or belief for everyone. Theologians should be able to explain the basis of this freedom in terms of dogma and political ethics in a clear, easy-to-understand way.
6. This includes a critical study of the ways in which Christianity has lived up to or violated its own standards throughout history. The OT and NT prove our faith to be highly self-critical and always including honest investigation and even repentance. At the same time, we must combat religious extremism and fundamentalism within our own ranks.
7. In addition to theological perspectives, Christians are interested in secular and empirical perspectives that examine reality in history and the present. We should become leaders in this area of research.
8. Thus, every known academic field of research has a potential to help describe, evaluate, and ameliorate issues of the suppression of religious freedom, whether the

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researchers or the victims belong to the Christian faith or to any other major or minor faith or worldview.

9. As a result, we need global cooperation with people of goodwill in research and advocacy, as well as a willingness to build and work within global networks related to these efforts.

<https://bonner-querschnitte.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/TS-Oslo-Keynote.pdf>

Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1:** Honorary Guest lecture by Thomas Schirmacher at Fjellhaug International University College in Oslo © IIRF
- **Photo 2:** Honouring Thomas Schirmacher 20 Years of IIRF – International Symposium at Fjellhaug International University College in Oslo © IIRF
- **Photo 3:** With the rector of Fjellhaug International University College in Oslo © IIRF
- Picture gallery of the event: <https://thomasschirmacher.net/travels/2025-oslo/>
- BQ 914 – 19/2026 “Anthology on theological perspectives on religious persecution launched at FIUC in Oslo”: <https://bonn-profiles.net/?p=12265>

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