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Schirmmacher calls for full freedom of religion for the Ahmadiyya at their large-scale events, which attract tens of thousands of listeners and spectators

At the 50th Jalsa Salana in Germany, the President of the International Council of the International Society for Human Rights appeals to Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia

(Mendig/Bonn, 23.10.2026) Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher, President of the International Council of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), called on the governments of Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia to end discrimination against and persecution of members of the Ahmadiyya and to guarantee them unrestricted civil rights and freedom of religion. He made the appeal at the 50th Jalsa Salana of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in Germany directly after the virtual message of their spiritual leader Caliph Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad.

The anniversary gathering took place from 4 to 6 September 2026 at Mendig Airfield in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. According to the organisers, a total of 48,330 people attended the Jalsa Salana. The police reported a peak attendance of up to 43,000 visitors. A further 2,000 people participated simultaneously in „Islamabad“—a center of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community near Tilford in Surrey, United Kingdom. The proceedings were interpreted into 21 languages on site and broadcast live worldwide by Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA). International broadcasts of such major gatherings featuring addresses by the Caliph usually reach an audience of millions through MTA and Youtube, particularly in Africa.



Thomas Schirmmacher delivering his speech to participants at the 50th Jalsa Salana in Mendig © IIRF/Martin Warnecke

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Those encounters had also repeatedly made one thing clear: interreligious dialogue must not conceal theological differences. Rather, both sides must express their deeply held religious convictions openly and unambiguously without losing respect for the other's convictions. Indeed, it is precisely people with such deep religious convictions who must stand together for each other's freedom of religion.

Following the speech, Abdullah Uwe Wagishauser, National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Germany, thanked Schirmmacher for his many years of commitment to the Ahmadiyya and their religious freedom worldwide.

Severe persecution in Pakistan

Schirmmacher addressed Pakistan in particular detail. Since a constitutional amendment in 1974, the Pakistani state has classified Ahmadis as non-Muslims. Since 1984, they have faced criminal penalties for, among other things, calling themselves Muslims; central forms of Islamic religious practice are also prohibited in public.

The continuing relevance of these restrictions became evident just four days after Schirmmacher's speech: On 8 September 2026, Pakistan's Federal Constitutional Court upheld the ban on "Rohani Khazayeen", a 23-volume collection of writings by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya. The court argued that the freedom of religion guaranteed by Article 20 of Pakistan's constitution is subject to law, public order and morality and may therefore be restricted by the government.

Schirmmacher cited the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), which had described the government's persecution of the Ahmadiyya in Pakistan as continuing to be "severe and systematic" in late 2025. Alongside discrimination under the law and criminal prosecution by the state, Ahmadis repeatedly face violence from non-state actors.

Schirmmacher declared: "I therefore appeal to the government of Pakistan: At long last, grant Ahmadis the same civil rights as all other Pakistanis and guarantee them full freedom of religion."

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Flag-raising ceremony at the Jalsa Salana: The German flag is raised alongside that of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Germany © IIRF/Martin Warnecke

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Indonesia and Malaysia

In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy, members of the Ahmadiyya also continue to face intimidation and restrictions on their religious practice. Schirmacher referred to reports by Christian Solidarity Worldwide stating that extremist groups attack Ahmadiyya communities and that state authorities often fail to provide adequate protection to those affected.

He appealed to the Indonesian government to protect the Ahmadiyya from violence and intimidation, remove restrictions on their religious practice and guarantee their members the same civil rights and freedom of religion as all other Indonesians.

Ahmadis also face discrimination and restrictions on their religious practice in Malaysia, where they constitute only a very small minority. Yet the treatment of small religious minorities with little social influence is a crucial test of how seriously a state takes the human right to freedom of religion.



"Love for All, Hatred for None"—the widely visible motto above the Jalsa Salana's large assembly hall © IIRF/Martin Warnecke

"Freedom of religion is indivisible"

Schirmacher emphasised that freedom of religion must not depend on theological agreement with another person's religion: "Freedom of religion is not a privilege reserved for majorities. Nor is it a privilege reserved for religions whose teachings the state or the majority consider correct. Freedom of religion proves its worth precisely where people hold convictions that others consider false."

Discussions with senior politicians from Rhineland-Palatinate

On the sidelines of the Jalsa Salana, Schirmacher also spoke with former Minister-President of Rhineland-Palatinate and current SPD parliamentary group leader Alexander Schweitzer, as well as Sabine Bätzing-Lichtenthäler, the state's Minister for Labour, Social Affairs, Women, Family and Youth and Deputy Minister-President.

On 20 December 2024, Schweitzer, then Minister-President, signed the agreement between the state of Rhineland-Palatinate and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat on behalf of the state. Bätzing-Lichtenthäler, who had previously served as the state's Social Affairs

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Minister from 2014 to 2021, had supported the agreement process politically in her then roles as SPD parliamentary group leader and state party chair.

Their discussion also addressed the increasingly difficult situation faced by well-integrated Muslims in Germany. Schirmmacher pointed out that, with increased migration since 2015, more extremist elements from the Islamic world had also arrived in Germany. In public perception, their criminal activity had cast a shadow over other Muslims as well. The Jalsa Salana itself offered a striking contrast, as demonstrated by the motto displayed in enormous letters above the large assembly hall filled with tens of thousands of Muslim participants: “Love for All, Hatred for None.”

Successful integration

At the conclusion of his speech, Schirmmacher had already referred to the traditional flag-raising ceremony of the Jalsa Salana, in which he had once again participated. During the ceremony, the German flag is raised alongside the flag of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Germany in the centre of the grounds, surrounded by the flags of Germany's federal states. The Ahmadiyya explicitly teach their members to respect the laws of the country in which they live and to be loyal citizens. Like the two politicians from Rhineland-Palatinate, Schirmmacher praised the successful integration of the approximately 50,000 Ahmadi living in Germany. At the same time, he recalled that many of them, or their families, had made Germany their new home precisely because they had been denied fundamental civil and religious rights in their countries of origin. Nevertheless, his hope remained that no Ahmadi would have to leave their homeland in order to enjoy elsewhere the freedom of religion and equal civil rights to which every human being is entitled.



Discussing integration, religious freedom and the situation of peace-loving Muslims in Germany: Thomas Schirmmacher with Alexander Schweitzer and Sabine Bätzing-Lichtenthäler © IIRF/Martin Warnecke

Downloads and Links

- Photo 1: Thomas Schirmmacher delivering his speech to participants at the 50th Jalsa Salana in Mendig © IIRF/Martin Warnecke
- Photo 2: Thomas Schirmmacher at the Jalsa Salana lectern, with the large assembly hall in the background © IIRF/Martin Warnecke

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- Photo 3: Flag-raising ceremony at the Jalsa Salana: The German flag is raised alongside that of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Germany © IIRF/Martin Warnecke
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- Photo 5: Abdullah Uwe Wagishauser, National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Germany, thanks Thomas Schirmacher after his speech © IIRF/Martin Warnecke
- Photo 6: Thomas Schirmacher speaking with Alexander Schweitzer and Sabine Bätzing-Lichtenthäler on the sidelines of the Jalsa Salana © IIRF/Martin Warnecke
- Photo 7: Discussing integration, religious freedom and the situation of peace-loving Muslims in Germany: Thomas Schirmacher with Alexander Schweitzer and Sabine Bätzing-Lichtenthäler © IIRF/Martin Warnecke
- The full speech by Thomas Schirmacher: <https://thomasschirmacher.net/?p=26034>
- Schirmacher meets the Caliph of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in London: <https://thomasschirmacher.net/?p=10208>
- Schirmacher thanks 40.000 Ahmadiyyas for the Engagement for Religious Freedom: <https://thomasschirmacher.net/?p=13190>

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