

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

Phone: +49 / 4106 / 804806; Fax: +49 / 4106 / 804807
E-Mail: bq@bucer.de; <http://www.bucer.org/bq.html>

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Religious Liberty Organizations Call Attention to Pakistan's Endangered Christian Minority

(Herndon, Virginia, USA / Bonn, Germany / Cape Town, South Africa, 18 April 2011)
Christian organizations that work for religious liberty have released a statement condemning the recent murder of Pakistani Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti who was to have been a key speaker at the Religious Liberty Partnership consultation in Virginia. They called for immediate action from Pakistan's government and the international community on behalf of Pakistan's endangered Christian minority.

In what is being called the "Virginia Statement on the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP), with member organizations in 20 countries, is calling on the worldwide Christian community to pray for Pakistan.

The Virginia Statement acknowledges some positive elements within Pakistan, including the Pakistani coalition government's courageous statements in condemning the acts of senseless violence and the courageous stance of President Asif Ali Zardari in declaring that, "We will not be intimidated nor will we retreat".

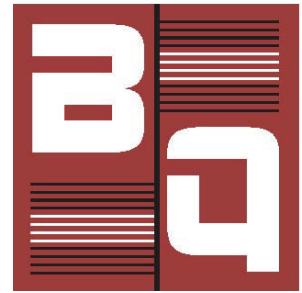
"It is remarkable that Pakistan, after having a leading role for more than a decade in trying to pass 'Defamation of Religions' resolutions at the United Nations, which critics saw as designed to justify its own blasphemy laws and to protect Islam from criticism, Pakistan has recently also proposed a new resolution which more closely reflects international law on freedom of religion and freedom of expression", said Dr Christof Sauer, Co-Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF), based in Cape Town, South Africa. "The RLP also applauds the work of the church around the world, including the several Dioceses of the Church of Pakistan, which has generously given humanitarian relief, disaster aid, assistance to displaced people, and practical assistance to victims of recent natural catastrophes in various parts of Pakistan."

Godfrey Yogarajah, Executive Director of the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, and leader of the IIRF Bureau in Sri Lanka, said that "Shahbaz Bhatti paid the supreme price with his life for standing up and speaking up for the poor, marginalized and the persecuted." He added that, "if the spiraling trend of violence is not dealt with immediately it will result in a breakdown of law and order and the very fabric of Pakistani society could crumble causing instability and anarchy."

Together with the IIRF director, Prof. Dr Thomas Schirmacher, the IIRF delegates agree: "The statement of the RLP is characterized by the fact that the most influential Christian human rights organizations are speaking with one voice, and that they have listened to the advice of local Christian leaders beforehand. The highly complex situation in Pakistan is assessed with much differentiation and positive aspects are acknowledged. At the same time very specific intervention is clearly called for."

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Text & Technology:
Titus Vogt (ViSdP)
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau
Phone: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 06
Fax: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 07
E-Mail: Titus.Vogt@bucer.de



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

Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance
www.ead.de/akref

Culture and Science Publ.
www.vkwonline.de

Giving Hands – International Charity
www.gebendehaende.de

Help Worldwide – International Charity
www.hilfeweltweit.de

Institute for Emergency Counselling, Terminal Care and Grief Counselling
www.bucer.de/ist

Institute for Pro-life and Family Studies
www.bucer.de/lfw

International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.islaminstitute.net

International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.iirf.eu

Martin Bucer Seminary
www.bucer.de

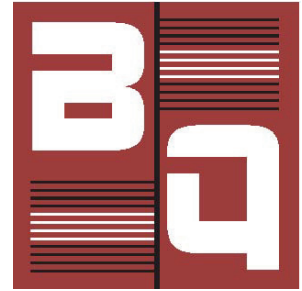
Pro Mundis e. V.
www.thomasschirmacher.net

Theological Commission of "Hope for Europe" (European Evangelical Alliance)
www.hfe.org

Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/

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The Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) is a collaborative effort of Christian organizations around the world focused on religious liberty. The RLP seeks to work together more intentionally in addressing advocacy and in raising the awareness of religious liberty issues globally. The RLP Leadership Team consists of: Mervyn Thomas (chairperson), Christian Solidarity International; Ron Boyd-MacMillan of Open Doors International; Anne Brandner of Global Peace Initiative, Canada; Andy Dipper of Release International, UK; Daniel Hoffman of Middle East Concern, Linus Pfister, HMK Switzerland; Godfrey Yogarajah of WEA.

The International Institute for Religious Freedom focuses on scholarly research on religious freedom, religious persecution and the situation of oppressed Christians. It is an institute of the World Evangelical Alliance.

Links:

- Religious Liberty Partnership: <http://www.rlppartnership.org/resources/rlp-statements>
- International Institute for Religious Freedom: www.iirf.eu
- The Mashī Foundation of Pakistan calls for a day of prayer on 20 April 2011 for the victims of the Blasphemy Laws (including Asia Bibi): www.mashifoundation.org

Downloads:

- Virginia Statement on the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (pdf)

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