

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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BQ 462 – No. 01/2017

IIRF responds to defacing of mosques in Cape Town

Desecration of religious buildings violates religious freedom

(Bonn, 13.01.2017) As has been widely reported in both the international and regional media, two mosques were recently desecrated in South Africa. As the False Bay Echo (January 12, 2017) reports, “In the first incident on Saturday night, January 7, a raw pig’s snout was placed in the gate of the Noorul Islam Simon’s Town Mosque. On Monday night, January 9, blood was splattered inside the Masjidul-Jamiah Kalk Bay Mosque, and its interior was trashed. Imam at the Kalk Bay mosque, Achmat Sity, said blood was splattered on the pulpit (mimbaar) and that framed scriptures (called rakkams) were torn from the walls.” The Echo further reports, “The acts came on the heels of a rant earlier in the week by Langebaan resident Liam Christian Ferreira who called Muslims “bastards” and called for a mosque to be burnt down.”

The crimes are not only being investigated by police and condemned by the Human Rights Commission of South Africa. Three important evangelical institutions have united to issue a press release condemning the crimes. The Evangelical Alliance in South Africa, together with Freedom of Religion South Africa and the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) joined to say, “Religious Freedom is for all. And the dignity of all must be respected and their right to peacefully exercise their religious convictions or none, free from social hostility or harassment, must be protected, even if one does not share their truth claims. There is no justification whatsoever for provocations, defacement of religious symbols or violence on religious or anti-religious grounds.” To this they added, “The South African Charter for Religious Rights and Freedoms, which was signed by representatives of most major and many smaller religious groups in South Africa (including ourselves) in 2010, states: ‘Every person has the right to religious



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.com

Giving Hands – International Charity
www.gebende-haende.de

Help Worldwide – International Charity
www.hilfe-weltweit.de

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

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

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

Martin Bucer Seminary
www.bucer.org

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/tc/

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dignity, which includes not to be victimized, ridiculed or slandered on the ground of their faith, religion, convictions or religious activities. No person may advocate hatred that is based on religion, and that constitutes incitement to violence or to cause physical harm.”

Prof. Dr. Christof Sauer, head of the Cape Town office of IIRF, added additional context in a manner that repudiates any legitimate Christian motivation for desecrating holy sites or institutions of other faiths: “The major representations of global Christianity, namely the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the World Evangelical Alliance, have in 2011 unanimously given recommendations for conduct in a document entitled ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World.’ It is foremost a peaceful and respectful witness acting in God’s love, imitating Jesus Christ, and adhering to Christian virtues: ‘Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement.’ ‘Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, ... including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.’ The reported acts fall far outside these standards, by which Christians want their actions to be measured.” Sauer added, “Looking at the global scene, we note with concern that my acts of violence are committed against adherents of religious minorities, their institutions, and symbols, in contexts where Muslims form the majority of the population. May we express the wish that our Muslim friends in South Africa publicly decry such acts and exert any possible influence, just as we do in their case?”

Sauer’s comments reflect the long-standing public policy of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), to which IIRF belongs. In their 2010 statement on the defamation of religions the WEA declared, “We seek to adhere to the commandment to bear no false witness against anyone. We also see no need for abasing the religions of others in order to lift up our own, as we do not consider our faith something we have created or own, but as a gift from God. So there is nothing we could improve about our faith by abasing that of others. At the same time we uphold the right to open debate on any issue, including religion, and to criticize worldviews or religions, any tenets they hold, goals they pursue or actions they perform. So our encounter with adherents of other religions and worldviews might include robust debate, including the exposing of inhuman practices, and opposing lies, falsehoods and deception. Equally we are willing to accept criticism of our faith, its tenets and our actions. Our response will be a critical self-examination on the one hand and a possible correction of our actions and a peaceful, verbal defense of our faith on the other hand, as appropriate.”

Downloads and Links:

- The press release of the Evangelical Alliance in South Africa, together with Freedom of Religion South Africa and the International Institute for Religious Freedom ([pdf](#))
- Report in the False Bay Echo: <http://www.iol.co.za/false-bay-echo/news/mosques-hit-by-hate-crimes-7390956>

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www.bucer.de/ilfw

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

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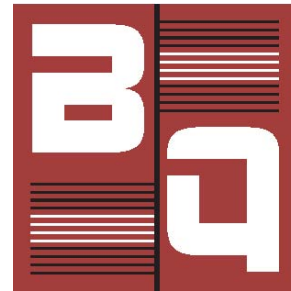
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- Report about the response of the Human Rights Commission of South Africa in the Times Live (January 11, 2017): <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2017/01/11/Human-rights-commission-slams-desecration-of-Cape-Town-mosques>
- “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World”: http://www.worldevangelicals.org/pdf/1106Christian_Witness_in_a_Multi-Religious_World.pdf
- The 2010 statement of the World Evangelical Alliance on the defamation of religions: <http://worldea.org/news/3291/A-statement-by-the-International-Institute-for-Religious-Freedom-and-the-WEA-Religious-Liberty-Commission-on-defamation-of-religion>
- Freedom of Religion South Africa: <http://forsa.org.za>
- The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa: <http://teasa.online>

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