

# Bonner Querschnitte

## Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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## BQ 839 - No. 19/2025

# Criticism of the intertwining of power politics and religion in Islamic countries

## Professor Christine Schirmmacher from Bonn spoke at the Religious Freedom Congress in Giessen

(Bonn, 02.03.2025) The Giessen School of Theology (FTH) organized its first international symposium on Religious Freedom in mid-February. Experts from various countries discussed the tension between aspiration and reality in the implementation of religious freedom worldwide.

With regard to the immense restrictions on religious freedom in Islamic countries, Christine Schirmmacher discussed the reasons for this in her lecture “Religious freedom in Islamic countries”. According to the Bonn Professor of Islamic Studies, neither the colonial past in parts of the Middle East nor underdevelopment and poverty can convincingly explain the religious freedom that is universally deplored in Islamic countries in the Middle East. “Even the frequently expressed assumption that religious freedom and Islam are irreconcilable opposites per se does not hit the nail on the head, especially since there are some examples, especially in African Islamic countries, with a considerable degree of religious freedom”, Schirmmacher said.



Prof. Dr. Christine Schirmmacher during her lecture © BQ/Johannes Otto

The core sentence of her statement was: “It is above all the intertwining of power politics and religion in Islamic countries that hardly allows any freedom rights for women and for dissenters, including dissenting Muslims, but in any case, for Jews and Christians, but also atheists or religions not recognized in Islam.” The Islamic scholarly world, Schirmmacher continues, especially mosques and theological training centres, are under close state control and have as much leeway as state rulers allow their representatives, while the powerful state apparatus has its respective policies legitimized “islamically” by

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Evangelical Missiology, Journal of missiopotop – Evangelical Forum for Missions, Cultures and Religions (German Evangelical Alliance) [missiopotop.org](https://missiopotop.org)

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

Giving Hands – International Charity (Bonn) [gebende-haende.de](https://gebende-haende.de)

Institut für Islamfragen der Deutschen, Schweizer und Österreichischen Allianz (IfI) [islaminstitut.de](https://islaminstitut.de)

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International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) (Bonn, Vancouver, San José – Costa Rica) [iirf.global](https://iirf.global)

International Journal for Religious Freedom (IJRF) (Bonn/Toronto) [ijrf.org](https://ijrf.org)

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Islam and Christianity [journal.islamistitute.net](https://journal.islamistitute.net)

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SOS World (Brussels) [sosworld.be/page-daccueil](https://sosworld.be/page-daccueil)

Theological Commission of the European Evangelical Alliance [europeanea.org](https://europeanea.org)

Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft (VKW) (Culture and Science Publ.) [vkwonline.com](https://vkwonline.com)

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the scholarly world in exchange for participation in power. “Freedom rights can hardly grow on this soil”, was the conclusion.

Dr. Heiner Bielefeldt, Senior Professor of Human Rights at the Friedrich Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, focused particularly on the political and normative foundations of religious freedom. Prof. Dr. mult. Thomas Schirmmacher, President of the International



View into the hall during Christine Schirmmacher's lecture © BQ/Johannes Otto

Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF), spoke about the increasingly threatened religious freedom of Jews. The challenges of recording violations of religious freedom were the subject of a lecture by the International Director of the IIRF, Dr. Dennis P. Petri. Speakers of the FTH included Prof. Dr. Christoph Raedel, Prof. Volker Kauder, Dr. Carsten Polanz, Dr. Meiken Buchholz and Prof. Dr. Stephan Holthaus. Further speakers were beyond others Prof. Dr. Janet E. Buckingham (IIRF), Dr. Yassir Eric (European School of Culture and Theology), Dr. Daniel Ottenberg (Open Doors) and Prof. Augustin Sawadogo (Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies).

### Downloads and links:

- **Photo 1, photo 2, photo 3:** Prof. Dr. Christine Schirmmacher during her lecture © BQ/Johannes Otto
- **Photo 4:** Christine Schirmmacher during her lecture, on the left Prof. Volker Kauder and FTH Rector Prof. Dr. Stephan Holthaus © BQ/Johannes Otto
- **Photo 5:** View into the hall during Christine Schirmmacher's lecture © BQ/Johannes Otto
- Information about the event: <https://fth.de/veranstaltung/symposium-religionsfreiheit/>
- The conference program: <https://bonner-querschnitte.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Symposium-Religionsfreiheit-Tagungsprogramm.pdf>
- BQ 837 'A call for joint commitment to religious freedom': <https://bonn-profiles.net/?p=8357>
- Website of Prof. Dr. Christine Schirmmacher: <https://christineschirmmacher.info>

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