

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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BQ 840 – No. 20/2025

Protestant congregation in Bursa (Turkey) had to vacate church building

Further expulsions of foreign Christians from Turkey

(Istanbul/Bonn, 10.03.2025) On Sunday, February 16, the last service of the Protestant congregation in Bursa (Turkey) took place in the *French Church* with about 80 visitors. Afterwards, all the congregation's belongings had to be cleared out. This marks the end of more than 21 years of largely unproblematic use of the church building, which dates back to the 19th century. In addition to the Protestant congregation, which regularly held its Sunday services here, Catholic and Orthodox services have also been held in the building for a number of years.



The empty church in the French Church in Bursa © BQ/Ismail Kulakçioğlu

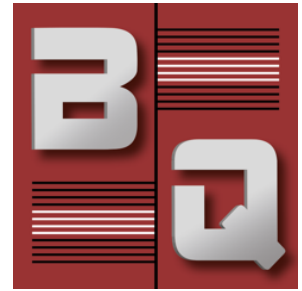
The background to the eviction order is a claim made by the authorities in summer 2024 that the church is no longer earthquake-proof and needs to be structurally reinforced. The Protestant congregation then had its own expert report drawn up, which showed that the dangers did not exist. (For further details, see BQ 804 – 27/2024 dated 26.08.2024.) The *Bursa Protestant Church Life and Culture Foundation* then tried to stop the eviction in court. Unfortunately, it did not succeed.

According to İsmail Kulakçioğlu, a graduate of the Martin Bucer Seminary's Turkish Study Center, an experienced lawyer, is preparing an appeal for the congregation before the Constitutional Court to have the order annulled because they are still convinced that it is not legal. At the same time, however, the congregation is hopeful that God can also use this new situation for his glory.

Protestant worshippers now use the church's own Fellowship Hall for services, but these are too small and have no official recognition as a "place of worship". This puts them back in a gray area. For this reason, an application has now been made to the governor to have the communal rooms recognized as a "place of worship". As there are no established procedures for such a process, the municipality is breaking new ground.

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International Secretariat of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) ishr.org

Islam and Christianity journal.islaminststitute.net

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SOS World (Brussels) sosworld.be/page-daccueil

Theological Commission of the European Evangelical Alliance europeanea.org

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Previous requests to the city for the allocation of alternative premises for church services were also unsuccessful. This is not surprising, as the *French Church* is the last church building in Bursa, a city with a population of over two million.

Further expulsions of foreign Christians

A few days ago, a foreign Christian woman in Izmir received a message that her application to extend her visa had not been approved and that she therefore should come to the authorities. When the whole family was at the office, it also became clear that the work visa of the husband, who worked as an engineer in a Turkish company, had been canceled after he had received a “code”. As a result, he was immediately taken into custody pending deportation. The wife, for her part, had to sign a document stating that she would leave the country with the children within ten days. Both are now to leave Turkey – separately – over the next few days.



The French Church in Bursa © Bursa Protestan Kilisesi

The representative of a Protestant community in Istanbul told BQ that he was deeply shocked and did not understand the authorities’ decision. “The big question is where the man became conspicuous. He simply worked as an engineer. We are all racking our brains.” This latest case is one of a whole series of similar cases that have increased sharply since December 2024. Around 50 people are now affected by this practice. The Association of Protestant Congregations denouncing has been practiced for a long time, but the practice continues unchanged and this is currently being stepped up.

Anyone who receives a “code” (often G-87) is usually classified as a person who is a “threat to national security”. This is usually associated with the withdrawal of work permits and visas. If you go on vacation abroad, for example, without knowing about such a code, you will be refused re-entry to Turkey. (Cf. BQ 802 – 25/2024 and the human rights report of the Association of Protestant Communities mentioned there.)

Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1:** The empty church in the French Church in Bursa © BQ/Ismail Kulakçioğlu

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- **Photo 2:** French Church in Bursa © Bursa Protestan Kilisesi
- Wikipedia entry on the French Church in Bursa (in German): [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Französische_Kirche_\(Bursa\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Französische_Kirche_(Bursa))
- Website of the Protestant community of Bursa (Bursa Protestan Kilisesi): <https://bursakilisesi.com>
- BQ 804 'Protestant congregation in Bursa/Turkey threatened with ban on use of building used for many years church' (in German): <https://bonn-profiles.net/?p=1082>
- BQ 802 'Significant increase in hate speech and hate crimes against Protestant Christians in Turkey': <https://bonn-profiles.net/?p=1107>
- Press release 'Protestant church used by three Christian communities in Bursa to be evicted' (in Turkish): <https://www.nobetcigazete.com/bursa-da-3-hristiyan-cemaatinin-de-kullandigi-protestan-kilisesi-tahliye-edildi/151731/> and <https://www.ih.com.tr/bursa-haberleri/bursada-3-hristiyan-cemaatinin-de-kullandigi-protestan-kilisesi-tahliye-edildi-193657641>

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