

# Bonner Querschnitte

*Bonn Profiles – Press Reports*

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## **BQ 295 – No. 09/2014**

### **Can Islamic Societies Practice Democracy?**

#### **A speech by Christine Schirmmacher at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in Cologne, Germany**

(Bonn, 04.04.2014) On the occasion of a speech entitled “Freedom, Democracy, and Islam: A Contradiction?” the Islamic Studies professor Christine Schirmmacher, Ph.D. presented the claim that there is no reason to assume that the practice of Islam as a religion stands in an irresolvable contradiction with democracy; however, “this only applies to Islam as a personal faith, not in relation to Islam as a legal system that determines legislation and judicial decisions.”

With lively participation from the audience, Schirmmacher spoke about various movements and theologians that attempt to make Islam compatible with the rights and freedoms of democracy. These approaches always call the classical Sharia definitions of law and society into question. “Wherever the Sharia legal system shapes civil law, social order, and legal decisions, there can be no wide ranging rights and freedoms in the sense of the 1948 United Nations Charter of Human Rights. According to its traditional interpretation Sharia law cannot allow equal rights to men and women, to Muslims and non-Muslims, nor to people who change religions or who are atheists.”

Addressing the question whether democracy according to a western definition can exist in Arab countries, Schirmmacher answered, “Democracy does not exist from itself; though it can be supported from outside it can only be brought into a region to a limited degree. The establishment of democracy requires economic development, but it especially needs a fertile soil in the realm of worldview to grow and succeed. Democracies need a background and foundation in the history of culture, recognized the by majority of the population, which provide a worldview basis and from which democracy can be explained. Only then can democracy be implemented by a majority and be socially established.”

Christine Schirmmacher is a professor in Leuven, Bonn, and Tübingen.

#### *Links and Downloads:*

- Invitation in German: <http://www.fdp-koeln.de/index.php?l1=8&l2=0&l3=1&tid=4520>

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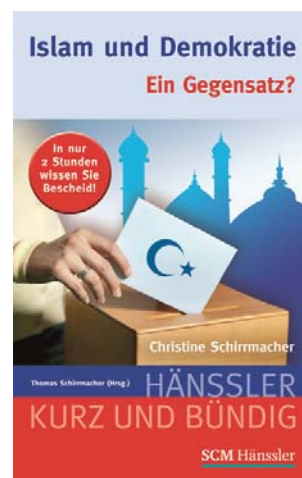
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- [BQ 264 – Nr. 29/2013](#): German Interview with Christine Schirmacher on the occasion of the publication of her book (in German) Islam and Democracy – a Contradiction?
- German Cover Islam and Democracy ([jpg](#))

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