

Bonner Querschnitte

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Protestant Christians in Turkey call for peace and hope for justice

New facilities of the congregation Malatya dedicated

(Malatya/Bonn, 19.04.2014) About 250 Protestant Christians gathered in Turkey for commemoration services at the graves of the martyrs of April 18, 2007 in Malatya. At that time, the Turkish Christians Necati Aydin and Uğur Yüksel, along with a German Christian Tilmann Geske, were brutally murdered by five young men on account of their Christian testimony in the city of Malatya in eastern Turkey. Necati Aydin was buried in Izmir, western Turkey; Uğur Yüksel in his home town of Elazığ, about 100 km from Malatya; and Tilmann Geske, at the request of his widow Susanne, in Malatya itself. Susanne Geske and their three children continue to live in Malatya.



Levent Kinran preaching by the grave of Tilmann Geske



Christians at the grave of Uğur Yüksel

The messages at the commemorative worship service mentioned the fact that April 18 this year fell on Good Friday. In his short comments in Malatya, the Istanbul pastor, Levent Kinran, mentioned that Jesus Christ died for the three martyrs, who then gave their lives for Jesus. But the death of Jesus and his message of peace are applicable for all the people of Malatya and all of Turkey.

Bedri Peker, pastor of Dirisu congregation in Istanbul, declared in his short sermon in Elazığ that even in Turkey only the blood of Jesus brings peace. The three Christians gave their lives for this peace. İhsan Özbek, pastor of the Protestant Kurtuluş congregation in Ankara, emphasized that Christians in Turkey finally expect justice only from God. But simultaneously he called on law enforcement officials in Turkey to establish justice



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so far as possible. The release of the murderers of Malatya, who were arrested right after their crimes, into house arrest a few weeks ago has left the little Protestant church in Turkey in astonishment.

In connection with the commemorations in Malatya, attorneys Erdal Doğan and Hafize Çobanoğlu released a press statement on behalf of the Turkish lawyers who have been involved in the Malatya hearings for almost seven years. They commented on the Malatya hearings up to this time. The intention of the relatives of the victims, Protestant Christians, and also their Turkish attorneys has not only been to see the five young men who were arrested offenders brought to justice as quickly as possible. They also want those offenders who were behind the scenes, who are the real offenders, as well as the supporting attitudes, brought to light so that similar murders of minorities in the future might be hindered. Many concrete facts which have been brought to the attention of prosecutors and the courts, and which were later confirmed, have not yet been taken seriously.

The change in the law, which limits jail time while awaiting trial to a maximum of five years, is a good step forward. However, the release of the murderers in the Malatya hearings almost appears to be a reward to the perpetrators from the side of the state. However, the lawyers praised the efforts of the prosecutors to continue their efforts to uncover injustice.



Attorneys Erdal Doğan and Hafize Çobanoğlu at the commemoration



from left: Susanne Geske, Ihsan Özbek, and Levent Kinran, cutting the ribbon to open the new church facilities

Late in the afternoon the Protestant church in Malatya celebrated the opening of its new facilities. This congregation was founded with the help of the three martyrs but until now has only been able to hold worship services in private apartments. Their first public facilities were opened with significant participation by Protestants from several parts of Turkey, as well as with visits from some neighbors. The police presence was conspicuous, but it was combined with a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

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- All photos © International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF)
- [Picture 1](#): Christians at the grave of Uğur Yüksel
- [Picture 2](#): Attorneys Erdal Doğan and Hafize Çobanoğlu at the commemoration
- [Picture 3](#): Levent Kinran preaching by the grave of Tilmann Geske
- [Picture 4](#): from left: Susanne Geske, Ihsan Özbek, and Levent Kinran, cutting the ribbon to open the new church facilities

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