

# Bonner Querschnitte

## Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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### BQ 379 – No. 43/2015

## Schirmmacher: Martyrdom has to become a Part of Doctrine

### Sant'Egidio campaigns against the Persecution of Christians at its International Meeting for Peace

(Bonn, 21.10.2015) At the International Meeting for Peace organized by the Catholic community Sant'Egidio, one of the largest interreligious meetings for dialogue in the world with leaders of all world religions, the World Evangelical Alliance's moderator for intrafaith and interfaith relations and human rights and freedom of religion expert, Thomas Schirmmacher, has called upon the international Christian community to awaken from its lethargy and demonstrate a heretofore unequalled level of solidarity in light of the world situation. According to Schirmmacher, there are politicians, journalists, and leaders of non-Christian religions who are campaigning more intensively for the destiny of persecuted Christians than many church leaders.



Thomas Schirmmacher during his lecture, at the far right the President of Sant'Egidio, Marco Impagliazzo

Schirmmacher spoke on a panel with representatives of all major denominations, and his statements are all accessible on the [internet](#).

In his contribution to the panel, Schirmmacher expressed sharp criticism on his own "guild," theologians who are working within the world of scholarship. On the one hand, academic theologians from all denominations still largely ignore the topic of martyrdom. This topic belongs within Christology and pneumatology, and Christian ecclesiology cannot be addressed without incorporating the topic of suffering for Christ. However, there is hardly anything in dogmatic theology that can be found on this. Church history, pastoral theology, and liturgy have to deal with this topic more intensively.

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Why are theologians who live and work in situations where there is persecution not listened to more intensively? Why is that which they write not accepted as true, let alone seen as scholarly theology?

It is not only theology which is still largely dominated by the West and ignores the everyday reality of suffering of many churches. Church life also largely pass by this fact. And as far as solidarity with persecuted Christians is concerned, it is still largely limited to one's own denomination.

In Schirmmacher's opinion, however, no Christian and no church can say that they do not have the time, the personnel, and the financial means for the simplest form of solidarity, which is prayer. A short prayer for those Christians affected by sheer violence should simply have a place in every Sunday worship service, in every Church event, and in every individual's morning and evening prayer.

Working for persecuted Christians has a positive effect on ecumenical relationships. There is not only ecumenicity among martyrs. Rather, it is in suffering for Christ that we often first recognize others to be fellow Christians. It was just 50 years ago that most Christians did not even accept the seven ancient Oriental churches (Coptics, Syrians, Armenians, Ethiopians, etc.), who currently suffer most bitterly, as Christians on account of their alleged Monophysitism ("teaching of one nature"), according to

Schirmmacher. That, however, is history. It has long since been recognized that these churches are essentially saying the same thing about Christ's nature as has traditionally been believed but are using different emphasize in terminology.

The President of St. Aegidio, Marco Impagliazzo, who moderated the panel, named Schirmmacher as perhaps the person who is most familiar with the situation regarding the persecution of Christians around the world and, indeed,

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The panel on the persecution of Christians

with respect to all denominations. He is reported to have personally spoken with the Pope about this several times and with all major leaders of Christian churches. In the near future, one of Schirmmacher's visions will become a reality in Tirana: an ecumenical conference, in which persecuted church leaders from all denominations will report to other church leaders about their situation. This conference at the beginning of November will be conducted under the umbrella of the Global Christian Forum (General Secretary: Larry Miller), organized by Vatican, the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship.

The founder of Sant'Egidio, Andrea Riccardi, wrote a book in 2000 on the topic of the persecution of Christians (*Il secolo del martirio. I cristiani nel Novecento*; English

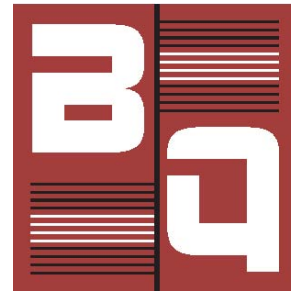
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translation of the title: *The Century of the Martyr*), which appeared in German in 2002. Since that time, Sant'Egidio, alongside *Church in Need*, is arguably the international Catholic organization which has occupied itself most intensively with the topic of martyrdom and religious freedom and, for that reason, maintains a close relationship with the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF), for example with the IIRF's representative for Rome, Prof. Thomas K. Johnson.

### Links:

- The two-hour panel:  
<http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/7988/langID/1062/PANEL-5--I-martiri-cambia-il-volto-del-cristianesimo.html>
- Excerpt from Schirmmacher's statements: <https://youtu.be/TuhnAXOfQro>
- Regarding the Panel:  
<http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/7712/langID/es/event/532/MESA-REDONDA-5--Los-mrtires-cambian-el-rostro-del-cristianismo.html>
- Regarding the International Meeting for Peace:  
<http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/7712/langID/es/Tirana-2015--Peace-is-Always-Possible.html>
- Regarding the Sant'Egidio Community:  
[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemeinschaft\\_Sant'Egidio](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemeinschaft_Sant'Egidio) /  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community\\_of\\_Sant%27Egidio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_Sant%27Egidio)

### Downloads:

- [Photo 1](#): Thomas Schirmmacher during his lecture, at the far right the President of Sant'Egidio, Marco Impagliazzo
- [Photo 2](#): The panel on the persecution of Christians
- [Photo 3](#): Thomas Schirmmacher in discussion with the President of Montenegro and the representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church
- [Photo 4](#): Thomas Schirmmacher in discussion with the President of Albania and the President of the Parliament of Tunisia
- [Photo 5](#): Thomas Schirmmacher and Louis Raphaël I Sako, Patriarch of Babylon

### List of Thomas Schirmmacher's Discussion Partners (a Selection)

#### Politicians

- Bujar Nishani, President of Albania
- Filip Vujanović, President of the Republic of Montenegro

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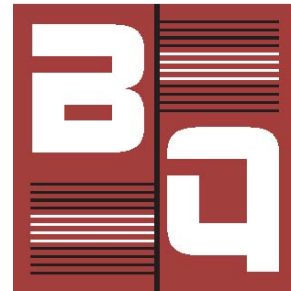
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- Andrea Orlando, Justice Minister, Italy
- Kamal Muslim, Minister of Religious Affairs, Kurdistan
- Khalid Jamal Alber, General Director for Christian Affairs, Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs, Kurdistan
- Abdelfattah Mourou, President of the Parliament of Tunisia

### Muslims

- Muhy al-Din Afifi, General Secretary of the Al-Azhar Islamic Research Academy, Egypt
- Din Syamsuddin, Cnhairma, Indonesian Ulema Council Center, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Sayyed Mohammad All Abtahi, President of the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue, Iran
- S. Abulhasan Navab, President of the University of Religions, Qom, Iran
- Seyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi, President of the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue, Teheran, Iran
- Muhammad Abd-ul-Khabir Azad, Grand Imam of the Central Mosque in Lahore, Pakistan
- Hajji Baba Mondji, Leader of the World Bektashi Community
- Mhamed Krichen, Newscaster and Moderator ("Principal Presenter"), Aljazeera Media Network, Qatar
- Abd Al-Hay Azab, President of Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

### Jews

- Abraham Skorka, Rector of the Marshall T. Meyer Rabbinical Seminary, Argentina
- Oded Wiener, Former General Director of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel

### Christians

- Andrea Riccardi, Professor of History and Founder of the Sant'Egidio Community
- Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, Damascus, with his Secretary Archbishop Dionysius Jean Kawak
- Anastasios, Archbishop and Head of the Albanian Orthodox Church
- Louis Raphaël I Sako, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, Iraq
- Ole Christian Maele Kvarme, Bishop of Oslo, Norway
- Cardinal John Olorunfemi Oloyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria
- Epiphanius, Coptic Archbishop, Egypt



Thomas Schirmmacher in discussion with the President of Montenegro and the representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church

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- Paulo Lockmann, Sao Paulo, Brazil, President of the World Methodist Council
- Armash Nalbandian, Primate of the Armenian Church of Damascus, Syria
- Marco Gnani, Rom, President of Sant'Egidio
- Dr. Elona Prroj, Vice General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of Albania, Human Rights Activist against Blood Vengeance
- Indunil J. Kodithuwakku, Secretary, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
- Archbishop Vincenzo Pagila, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family
- Vasilios, Metropolit, Orthodox Church of Cyprus

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