

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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Thomas Schirmmacher expresses Gratitude to Hessian Prime Minister Bouffier upon the occasion of a visit by the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch

A Greeting from the Central Council of Oriental Christians in Germany (Zentralrat Orientalischer Christen in Deutschland, or ZOCD) for the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch

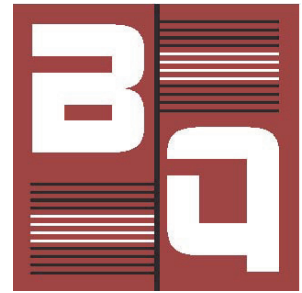
(Bonn, 05.09.2016) A delegation of the ZOCD Board and Advisory Board, headed by the Advisory Board Chairman Thomas Schirmmacher, participated in the opening ceremony of the new Syriac Orthodox Church in Giessen. The Advisory Board Chairman participated as a bishop in the ceremony and conveyed the ZOCD's welcoming words to the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch S.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II and to the Hessian Prime Minister Volker Bouffier.

Schirmmacher labeled the new church a successful example of integration. This is due to the fact that the church is simultaneously a beautiful German and a beautiful Syriac Orthodox church. Schirmmacher thanked the Patriarch for his untiring efforts for peace and justice in a situation where a large part of his church is fleeing. Schirmmacher also expressly thanked the Patriarch for his intensive support for the ZOCD.

Schirmmacher also thanked the Hessian Prime Minister (governor) Volker Bouffier for having provided successful legal representation to many Syriac-Orthodox Christians in his home city of Giessen in the past and for having done so much for the integration



from the left: The Syriac Orthodox Patriarch, the Metropolitan of Germany, the Metropolitan of the Netherlands, Thomas Schirmmacher



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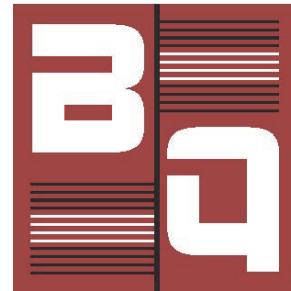
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of Oriental Christians in Hesse over the course of his decade as Interior Minister. Schirmmacher indicated that it was a great symbol of solidarity that it did not come down to choosing between two important engagements in order to personally speak to



Volker Bouffier, Prime Minister of Hesse, Thomas Schirmmacher, the Patriarch

the assembled congregation. For his part, Schirmmacher also thanked Bouffier, as Deputy Federal Chairman of the CDU party, for supporting integration of the topic of the persecution of Christians and religious freedom, which already had its own working committee, into the important working committees for foreign policy in the Adenauerhaus in Berlin. The following appeared in a newspaper article: “On Sunday, with singing and cheers, 2,000 people received the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, who was to conduct the dedication during a worship service. Pastor Lahdo Aydin welcomed His Holiness as well as the head of the archdiocese of Germany, His Eminence Mor Philoxenus Matthias Nayis, and additional bishops. Representatives of the Evangelical, Catholic, Coptic, and Rum Orthodox Church were also present. From the secular side, Prime Minister Volker Bouffier and City Councilor Astrid Eibelshäuser, among others, attended the festivities. The congregation in Gießen has existed since 2001. About 140 families belong to the congregation” (newspaper source: *Gießener Allgemeine*, www.giessener-allgemeine.de).

The cost of construction totaled € 1.5 million. Especially notable is the altar, which was produced from rock in the Tur Abdin region around the famous Mor Gabriel Monastery in Turkish Anatolia, where the Syriac Orthodox Church finds itself under a lot of pressure.

Syriac Orthodox Patriarch thanks the World Evangelical Alliance

Additionally, Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher delivered a message of solidarity and good wishes on behalf of the World Evangelical Alliance.

In addition to the official audience with the Patriarch of the Church, H. H. Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, there were a list of other discussions with the Syriac Archbishops of Damascus, of the Netherlands, and of Sweden. The current persecution of Syrian Christians in their homeland in the Middle East was central to the discussions.

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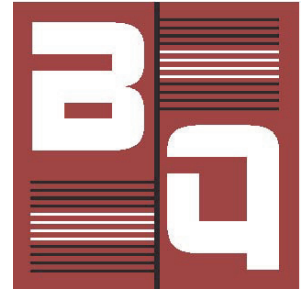
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In the audience, the Patriarch expressed renewed and heartfelt thanks to the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) for its intensive efforts for the members at all levels of his Church, in prayer, with other churches, in the media, in politics, and at the UN. The General Secretary of the WEA, Bishop Efraim Tendero (The Philippines), had recently met with the General Secretary of the United Nations and urged that the situation facing Christians in the Near East be placed very high on the agenda.

The Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch has an estimated 100,000 members in Germany and is spread over 60 congregations. Most believers come from the Tur Abdin region in the eastern part of Turkey, from where they had in



Die neue Kirche und das Kirchweihfest

part already fled decades ago on account of the persecution of Christians. In recent years, the congregations have absorbed many refugees, in particular from Syria.

The head of the Church in Germany has been Archbishop Mor Philoxenus Mattias Nayis (Warburg) since December 2012. Archbishop Mor Julius Hanna Aydin (Delmenhorst) is responsible for contacts with other churches and in the political realm. Still today the language of the Church is Old Aramaic, the language Jesus Christ spoke. Turoyo, a new Aramaic dialect, is spoken in everyday life.

Downloads and Links:

- <http://www.syrisch-orthodox.org/>: Website of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch in Germany
- <http://www.zocd.de/>: Website of the Central Council of Oriental Christians in Germany
- [Photo 1](#): Thomas Schirmmacher greeting the Patriarch upon his arrival
- [Photo 2](#) and [Photo 3](#) from the left: The Syriac Orthodox Patriarch, the Metropolitan of Germany, the Metropolitan of the Netherlands, Thomas Schirmmacher
- [Photo 4](#) and [Photo 5](#) from left: Volker Bouffier, Prime Minister of Hesse, Thomas Schirmmacher, the Patriarch, the pastor of the new church, the Metropolitan of Germany
- [Photo 6](#): Volker Bouffier during his address

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- [Photo 7](#): Welcoming words from the ZOCD to the Patriarch given by Thomas Schirmmacher
- [Photo 8](#): The Patriarch
- [Photo 9](#): The new church and the church dedication
- [Photo 10](#): The festival tent
- [Photo 11](#): With the Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan of Damascus

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