

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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BQ 158 – No. 04/2010

Religious freedom experts criticize the initiative of Islamic states in the UN Human Rights Council

Bielefeldt and Schirmmacher hold a public discussion in a Nuremberg church

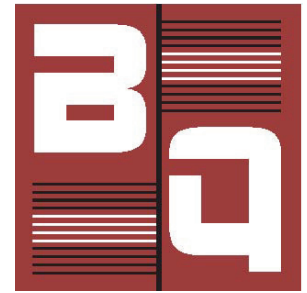
(Bonn, 28.01.2011) In a joint event in the Langwasser Free Church (in German, Freie Christengemeinde Langwasser, related to the Czech Brethren tradition) in Nuremberg, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the freedom of religion and belief, Prof. Dr. Heiner Bielefeldt, and the Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance, Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher, appealed for a greater engagement of the international community, especially from the free countries, on behalf of religious freedom. Freedom of religion is enshrined in numerous international treaties under international law that have been signed by virtually all countries in the world.

Both experts responded negatively to the current attempt by Islamic countries, led by Pakistan, to describe the "defamation of religion" as a human rights violation within the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly. Such a step would turn human rights issues upside down. Bielefeldt explained that the subjects of human dignity and the resulting human rights are clearly individuals, not a religion as such. Freedom of thought and speech are so closely tied with freedom of religion that their limitation on the topic of religion destroys the freedom of religion. Bielefeldt had previously addressed this problem in his recent inaugural speech in the United Nations Human Rights Council.

In his morning sermon Schirmmacher said the New Testament report (Acts chapter 19) about the tumult in Ephesus shows that persecution and the violation of religious freedom are often heavily intertwined with other factors. The persecution in Ephesus



Prof. Dr. Heiner Bielefeldt (l.) and Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher



A joint platform for the following Bonn organizations on the basis of the Evangelical Alliance:

Institute for Prolife and Family Studies
www.bucer.de/ilfw

Institute for Emergency Counseling, Terminal Care and Grief Counseling
www.bucer.de/ist

Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance
www.ead.de/akref

International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.iirf.eu

International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.islaminstitute.net

Theological Commission of "Hope for Europe" (European Evangelical Alliance)
www.hfe.org

Martin Bucer Seminary
www.bucer.de

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Giving Hands – International Charity
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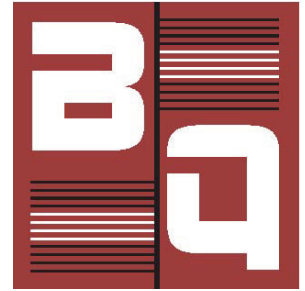
Culture and Science Publ.
www.vkwoonline.de

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was plotted by silversmiths whose profits from the Diana temple declined because of Christian preaching. Similarly, Schirmmacher said, the writer of Acts describes very positively how the representatives of the state, in light of Roman law, could peacefully end the persecution. The state must protect Christians from persecution, not because they are Christians, but because it is the task of the state to maintain peace and justice for all, including Christians. Precisely because Christian churches have long recognized the monopoly of the state in the use of force, they neither want nor can defend themselves against violent criminals; they must rely on the protection of the state. In situations where this protection by the state is not provided, or if violence against Christians even comes from a state, others states need to raise their voices.

German to English translation by Thomas K. Johnson

Downloads:

- Picture 1: Prof. Dr. Heiner Bielefeldt (right) and Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher
- Picture 2: Heiner Bielefeldt
- Picture 3: Thomas Schirmmacher
- Picture 4: Heiner Bielefeldt (left) and Thomas Schirmmacher
- Picture 5: Heiner Bielefeldt (left) and Thomas Schirmmacher
- Picture 6: From left: Thomas Schirmmacher, Heiner Bielefeldt, and Pastor Goss (Pastor of the host congregation in Nuremberg)

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