

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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Irish launch of the Global Charter of Conscience

(Bonn, 23.05.2013) Introducing the Irish launch of the Global Charter of Conscience today, Seán Mullan from the Evangelical Alliance Ireland said there could not be a more appropriate time to raise awareness of such an important Human Rights document. First published at the European Parliament in Brussels, the Global Charter of Conscience was officially launched in Dublin by its co-authors Dr Os Guinness (the great-great-great grandson of Arthur Guinness) and Dr Thomas Schirmmacher. The launch was reported by major Irish newspapers and national radio and TV stations.

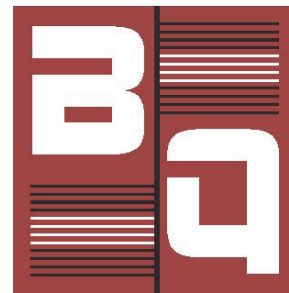
In modern times, freedom of conscience is under threat from government oppression, sectarian violence and western confusion, Dr Guinness said. "One of my sharpest boyhood memories was when I was 7-years-old in China," Dr Guinness recalled. "My dad put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Son we are in trouble. It will be a matter of weeks before the communist troops are here.' During the Reign of Terror, we were under house arrest. It was my first experience of government oppression and of very severe persecution."

The charter was created to re-affirm and celebrate Article 18 of the Declaration of Human Rights, a statement of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief applying equally to people of religious belief and those with a secular worldview. "We live in a world of exploding diversity. Entire worldviews live shoulder to shoulder. The question is how do we live with our deep differences? Many people think religious freedom is freedom for the religious. Article 18 is for all worldviews and not purely for the religious. The most unfashionable groups must still know that their rights are guaranteed," Dr Guinness added.

German-born academic and human rights activist, Dr Thomas Schirmmacher PhD, who is Director of the International Institute of Religious Freedom, affirmed the charter's significance. "As someone who is on the road for human rights all the time, my experience is that everybody fights for his own human rights and easily denies the same rights to others who are different," Dr Schirmmacher said. "When we lobby for the



Seán Mullan, Os Guinness, Thomas Schirmmacher in discussion



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www.ead.de/akref

Culture and Science Publ.
www.vkwoonline.de

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www.gebende-haende.de

Help Worldwide – International Charity
www.hilfe-weltweit.org

Institute for Emergency Counselling, Terminal Care and Grief Counselling
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International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.islaminstitute.net

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www.thomasschirmmacher.net

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

Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance
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freedom of everybody, we will have the most freedom ourselves. We can only find freedom alltogether or not at all. Too often each grouping, whether religious or secular, will complain that they are the victim. However, when one worldview becomes dominant, others suffer." Dr Thomas Schirmmacher stated.

"Recently, I was lecturing in Nepal where for several years, they had a communist dictatorship in what is a very religious country. Now, many Hindus want to take revenge for the communist era by putting atheists in prison. If this country wants to have a future, it will not help if everybody struggles for power. My experience is that the global charter of conscience opens the space for debate between people who have not talked to each other for a long time. When religious people and non-religious people come together and talk to each other we can discover how to maintain both sides in a society. It is not about who should leave but how we can co-exist. Let's find common solutions."



Interview with the Irish State Radio

Responding to questions from the audience of human rights advocates, journalists, international faith leaders and lawyers, the panel agreed that there are a whole range of issues in which freedom of conscience is under threat in the west. "It is important to consider if you deny freedom of conscience what else will suffer," Dr Guinness warned. "It is possible to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

It is "disastrous and outrageous" that Ireland's abortion bill threatens freedom of conscience for institutions such as Irish Catholic hospitals, Dr Guinness added. "All our democracies are party democracies and they only function if each party has the freedom to hold corporately to differing viewpoints and beliefs," said Dr Schirmmacher. "A institution needs to have the freedom to stand for something that the majority does not stand for."

Source: http://vox.ie/blog/item/167-global_charter

Downloads and Links:

- The Global Charter of Conscience ([pdf](#))
- <http://charterofconscience.org/>
- [Photo 1](#)
- [Photo 2](#): Interview with the Irish State Radio

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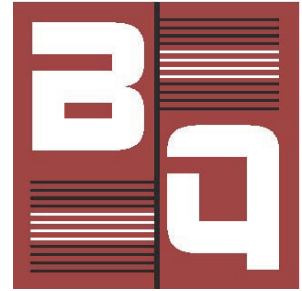
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- [Photo 3](#)
- [Photo 4](#)
- [Photo 5](#): Seán Mullan, Os Guinness, Thomas Schirmmacher in discussion
- [Photo 6](#)

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