

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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First ‘International Consultation on Religious Freedom Research’ in Istanbul

Evaluation of the consultation by Prof Dr Janet Epp Buckingham published as IIRF Reports no. 7

(Bonn, 14.12.2013) 45 researchers, mainly professors, met in Istanbul for the *International Consultation on Religious Freedom Research* on invitation by the International Institute for Religious Freedom (Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo) of the World Evangelical Alliance, in cooperation with the Research Group for Human Geography of the University of Tübingen (Germany), the Unit for Church and Law of the Beyers-Naudé Centre at Stellenbosch University (South Africa), the Department of Constitutional Law and Philosophy of Law of the University of the Free State (South Africa), and the Study Group on Religious Freedom and Persecution of the International Association for Mission Studies.

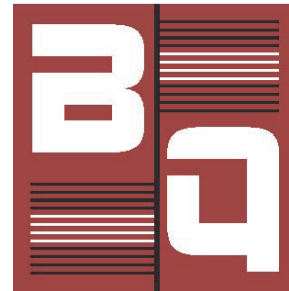
Coming from all continents, they represented several religions and beliefs, and several Christian confessions, even though Protestant researchers were overrepresented, mirroring the situation worldwide. The researchers represented a wide range of disciplines, such as law, sociology, human geography, comparative religions, and theology.

The conference was organized by IIRF’s co-director Christof Sauer (South Africa) and IIRF’s research coordinator Joseph Yakubu (Nigeria) with the help of local IIRF staff in Turkey.

Beside research on specific countries like Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Sudan, Cyprus, and Turkey, the consultation gathered regional case studies of religious violence and how to counteract it. Rainer Rothfuß, professor of human geography in Tübingen, Germany, promoted studies for “governance for peace” for divided countries like India, Sudan, Cyprus or Timor Leste. Abhijit Nayak from India followed a similar line for his country in Hindu-Christian conflicts.

But there were also discussions how more peaceful situations could be improved. Law professor Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves from Brazil described the need to implement religious freedom more robustly in Latin American countries. Law professor Janet Epp Buckingham from Canada lectured on “The treatment of minority religions by a dominant religion”, and professor of constitutional law Shaun de Freitas from South Africa on “Cautioning against irreligious proselytism in education”.

Beside the national and the regional focus, several researchers discussed questions of global impact. Leading statistician of religion Todd M. Johnson researched the “Impact of global trends in religious demography on religious freedom”. Dr Theodor



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Ratgeber, doing a major ecumenical research project for the Protestant Church in Germany and the Catholic German Bishops Conference, argued for basing all religious freedom research methodology on a human right's approach.

South African Law professors Lovell Fernandez and Werner Nicolaas Nel presented each their line of the legal arguments why and when persecution of Christians should be qualified as genocide and crimes against humanity. Italian law professor from Naples, Antonio Fucillo, discussed in depth the relationship of "Law, economy, and religion" and applied the results to religious freedom questions.

The chief of the sociology of religion department of Istanbul University presented a paper on "Projections of religious Freedom in Islam and Muslim Traditions".

Read also the comment by Prof Dr Janet Epp Buckingham in the just published IIRF Reports no. 7 [[Download here](#)]

See also the next two Bonner Profiles on the consultation.

Downloads:

- IIRF Reports no. 7 ([pdf](#))

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