

# Bonner Querschnitte

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## **BQ 304 – No. 18/2014**

### **WEA Ambassador for Human Rights speaks at Brazil's Superior Court of Justice, visits Brazil's Supreme Federal Court, and lectures at Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie**

*Translated and combined from sources in the Portuguese language*

(Bonn, 14.06.2014) "Religion is part of one's personality. It is not like a car so that you arbitrarily can restrict its use from time to time," claimed Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher in a lecture in Brazil's Supreme Court.

The lectures were attended by about 400 congressmen, members of the government, government staff, representatives of public authorities, heads of Christian churches, leaders of other religions, and the leadership of the Christian legal association ANAJURE.

Schirmmacher is the Rector of Martin Bucer Seminary, including its Brazilian branch, Executive Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom, and Ambassador for Human Rights of the World Evangelical Alliance.

ANAJURE opened the First International Congress on Civil Liberties at the auditorium of the

Brazilian Supreme Court with the theme "Freedom of Expression and Conscientious Objection." The lectures were given by Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher, Professor of the Sociology of Religion and international human rights activist, and Dr. Jonatas Machado, Professor for Constitutional Law at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, and moderated by Prof. Dr. Uziel Santana from the University of Aracaju and president of the association of Christian lawyers, ANAJURE.

Dr. Machado lectured on "Constitutional and State Religious Neutrality between Theism and (Neo) Atheism," and on "Freedom of Expression, the Clash of Worldviews and Hate Speech."

Schirmmacher spoke on "The Situation of Religious Freedom Worldwide" and "Reasons for the Promotion and Defense of Religious Freedom." He addressed three major questions: 1. "Why religious freedom should be part of national and international



Opening of the Congress; from right: Schirmmacher, Machado, President, Chancellor, Rector

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public policy;” 2. “Why religious freedom helps to build a peaceful society;” and 3. “Why religious freedom is in the interest of non-religious people.”

Among the officials present was the Chief Minister of the General Secretariat of the Presidency of Brazil, Gilberto Carvalho, who represented the President of Brazil. [After serving as chief of staff of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, for eight years, Gilberto Carvalho has been President Dilma Rousseff’s general secretary for three years.] Minister Carvalho stated that the state and the government should be guardians of religious freedom and freedom of expression through laws and constant vigilance so that these freedoms are not hurt because they are important achievements of society. The minister also stressed that the Brazilian government is aware of the issues presented by Schirmmacher and Machado. “My presence at this event is our recognition of this initiative, as it helps in construction and consolidation of respect for one another.”

Afterwards, Schirmmacher and Machado, together with a delegation of ANAJURE, visited the Supreme Federal Court in Brasilia and met the Judge and Minister Gilmar



Mendes and Schirmmacher

Mendes, who just finished his term as president of Brazil’s constitutional court. Minister Mendes recognized the relevance of the topics. He suggested organizing an even larger international academic conference on religious freedom in the Supreme Federal Court.

Then Minister Mendes had a private discussion with Thomas Schirmmacher in German, as Mendes did his doctorate in Germany and has published books on the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany.

Later Dr Santana commented on the events with the following words: “The presence of ANAJURE in the Superior Court of Justice and Supreme Federal Court demonstrates that our struggle in defense of fundamental civil liberties is most important in a democratic state, and that our judiciary knows this issue should be discussed and analyzed in our country. We have found an echo and support in all three powers of our Republic, as well as in civil society and in our churches. We thus fill a gap that is still existing in Brazilian evangelicalism.”

The Superior Court of Justice (Superior Tribunal de Justiça, STJ) is Brazil’s highest regular federal court, from which one can only go on toward the constitutional court in matters related to the constitution. The Supreme Federal Court (Supremo Tribunal Federal, STF) is Brazil’s constitutional court and the highest federal court.

## Guest Lecture on Religious Freedom at the Law Faculty of Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie in Sao Paulo

The day after speaking at the First International Congress on Civil Liberties at the auditorium of the Brazilian Supreme Court, Dr. Schirmmacher and Dr. Machado gave a

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double guest lecture on “Religious Freedom as a Fundamental Right: Report, Theories and Challenges.” The lecture was at the invitation of the Faculty of Law of Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie in Sao Paulo, together with the Christian legal association ANAJURE. Among the 500 listeners in the auditorium of Mackenzie University were also several professors of other faculties of the university.

It was unusual in that the double guest lecture was opened by the three top leaders of the university, the Rector Prof. Dr. Benedito Aguiar Neto, the Chancellor Prof. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes, and the President of the Board of Regents, Dr. Mauricio Melo de Meneses. The dean of the theological faculty, Dr. Augustus Nicodemus, and the dean of the law school were also present.



Schirmmacher with translator Mauro Meister

In his lecture Schirmmacher praised Brazil because the country made a rather quick transition from a country with an overwhelming state religion with a significant intermingling of majority religion and politics towards a country with one of the best records concerning religious freedom. The newest study by the PEW Research Center proves that Brazil has better grades regarding religious freedom than the USA and the best grades of the twenty countries with the largest number of inhabitants worldwide.

Schirmmacher emphasized that careful social scientific research has demonstrated that a country suppressing or exiling its religious minorities hurts itself economically and in other ways, while taking in refugees from religious minorities is in the interest of any country. As a German, Schirmmacher noted that the harm and cost of killing and driving out the Jews from Germany was so high for Germany that it cannot be calculated, whereas receiving many of those Jews helped the USA to become the leading super power. Prussia became a major power in Europe partly because the Prussian king invited everyone in Europe who was persecuted or exiled because of religious affiliation to come to Prussia. He offered them freedom of religion and freedom from being taxed for a time, if they would help to make his land arable and build up Prussia.

After the lectures, there was a public debate with the two speakers and Prof. Dr. Uziel Santana on “Political and legal issues of religious freedom in the Brazilian and international context.” Asked by listeners what he thinks about the secular, neutral state more and more suppressing conservative Christian moral positions, e.g. on abortion, marriage or sexual orientation, Schirmmacher stated that this is not the work of a neutral state but the work of a state that is misused by liberal Christians and adherents of certain atheist worldviews which is suppressing more conservative Christians.

The Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie is a private university in São Paulo, Brazil with 44,200 students. Founded in 1870 as the American School, Mackenzie is one of

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the oldest institutions of higher education in Brazil. The university is regarded nationally and internationally as a center of excellence, having graduated numerous important names of Brazilian history. Apart from its main campus in São Paulo, Mackenzie University has campuses in Barueri, Brasília, Campinas, Recife and Rio

de Janeiro. The nickname “Mackenzista” is often used to refer to current or former Mackenzie students, as many of its alumni regularly enter state service.



Lecture room, MBS Brazil

Following speaking at the Supreme Court and Mackenzie University, Schirmmacher opened the new academic semester of the Brazilian branch of Martin Bucer Seminary with 20 new students whom he welcomed with a sermon on Romans 12:1-2 in the Igreja Batista da Graça (Grace Baptist Church) in São José dos

Campos, the neighbor city of São Paulo. The pastor of this church, Gilson dos Santos, is chair of the board (“Conselho”) of the Brazilian Seminário Martin Bucer. Other members of the board are the dean and professor of Systematic Theology, Mr. Franklin Ferreira, and Mr. Matias Heidmann, who works for Deutsche Bank.

The training center of Martin Bucer Seminary lies outside of São José dos Campos – SP, at Estrada Varadouro which is provided by a successful constructor. The students live and study at the training center for one week every semester. In addition to the two yearly intensive study weeks at the training center they meet monthly for study and discussion in six further Brazilian cities: Araguara (SP), Brasília (DF), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), São José dos Campos (SP), Três Lagoas (MS) and Volta Redonda (RJ).



MBS Brazil – view from the lecture hall

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### Links:

- Speech: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFs0eSEPHvk>
- Interview (starts at 0:55): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=anXdGIItiZY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anXdGIItiZY)
- <http://www.anajure.org.br/anajure-e-mackenzie-realizam-seminario-internacional-sobre-liberdade-religiosa/>
- <http://www.anajure.org.br/comitiva-da-anajure-visita-supremo-tribunal-federal/>

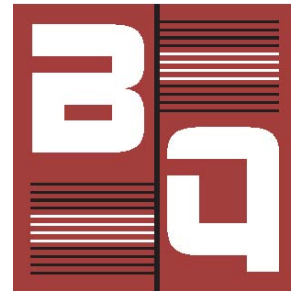
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- <http://www.anajure.org.br/com-palestra-do-dr-thomas-schirmacher-anajure-encerra-congresso-internacional-no-stj/>
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- Universidade Mackenzie:  
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### Downloads:

- [Photo1](#): Schirmacher during lecture
- [Photo2](#): Superior Tribunal de Justiça (the building in front)
- [Photo3](#): Supremo Tribunal Federal
- [Photo4](#): Constitutional Court, Mendes forward in the center
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