

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

Phone: +49 / 4106 / 804806; Fax: +49 / 4106 / 804807
E-Mail: bq@bucer.de; <http://www.bucer.org/bq.html>

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We should invite Muslim neighbors to our homes

Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom at the ICF Conference in Zurich

Reported by Florian Wüthrich, Source: [Livenet](#)

(Bonn, 21.05.2015) ICF, the International Christian Fellowship, a neo-charismatic church movement in 8 countries, which includes the largest congregation in Switzerland in Zurich pastored by Leo Bigger, took a new step with the invitation of Dr.

Thomas Schirmmacher from World Evangelical Alliance to the annual conference at the Hallenstadion Neuland. For the first time the themes of the persecuted church and relations with Islam were discussed. About 4,300 Christians participated in the ICF Conference on the theme "Moving Forward".

In addition to the appearance of the well-known human rights activist and bridge-builder, Thomas Schirmmacher, the ICF Conference 2015 offered the expected mix of spectacular show elements, authentic life reports, and entertaining sermons by international speakers such as Mike Pilavachi and Priscilla Shirer.

"Moving Forward" was the motto of the conference this year which was, according to official statistics of the organizers, attended by 4,374 Christians. Rather surprisingly, the free-church movement dared to take up the topic of Islam during the "Lunch Talk" Friday noon. The Lunch Talk moderator was Tobias Teichen (Pastor, International Christian Fellowship, Munich), who used the title "The Persecuted Church: Constructive Interaction with Islam" for the interview. His guest was the well-known German theologian and author, Professor Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher.

In the second part of Lunch Talk, Tobias Teichen moved the discussion in the direction of Islam, and especially how Christians in Switzerland and Germany should interact with Islam. Schirmmacher emphasized that Islam does not have the same



Thomas Schirmmacher at Lunch Talk at the ICF Conference 2015



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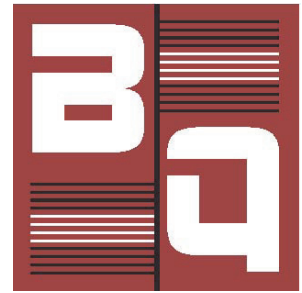
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Text & Technology:
Titus Vogt (ViSdP)
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau
Phone: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 06
Fax: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 07
E-Mail: Titus.Vogt@bucer.de

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meaning everywhere. “To say I know how Muslims tick is almost the same as to say I know how Christians tick.” As an example he mentioned Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, with his very friendly people, who live in peace with its Christian



Tobias Teichen Pastor, ICF Munich, moderating Lunch Talk

population. He noted that Muslims are sometimes avoided because people project everything terrible that was done in the name of Islam onto individual Muslims. This troubles Schirmmacher. “When was the last time that a Christian in Germany or Switzerland talked with a Muslim about faith in Jesus, and then got a black eye for it?” In the following discussion with Livenet he made his statement even stronger: “It is really astonishing how strong our inhibitions are! Do we really think every Muslim has a hand grenade in his pocket?”

he reassured them. “Muslims like to talk about themes such as family and God.” And polls among people who have immigrated to Germany find one especially strong wish in relation to the local population: “They would really like to be invited into a German home.” But the problem is that Germans first have to find a dictionary to know what the word hospitality means.

One does not have to know anything about Islam to invite Muslims to your home. “Muslims love to talk about their faith. All you have to do is ask questions,” claimed Schirmmacher. He also explained why an invitation means so much to immigrants. “In many cultures, a visit to someone’s home marks the beginning of a relationship. But in Western Europe, such a visit is often the last step, after the relationship has already been built up over a period of time.”

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Hospitality as the key to hearts

Schirmmacher challenged the attendees at the ICF Conference, instead of being so anxious, to simply talk with Muslims. “It is really simple,”



During the discussion

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Titus Vogt (ViSdP)
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau
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E-Mail: Titus.Vogt@bucer.de

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Trusting in the power of the gospel

Schirmmacher sometimes receives criticism that he speaks too positively about Islam and ignores the dangers, he told Livenet. Especially among older crowds in traditional churches it is a “futile labor of love” to encourage Christians to talk with Muslims and to discuss the faith with them. But, in his opinion, with a defensive mentality and acts such as forbidding Minarets, no one will be won for the gospel. The decisive question is what persuasive power we expect the gospel to have. “I believe that the message of Jesus has the power even to convince Muslims.”

Schirmmacher was thankful for his invitation to ICF. He was convinced that these young people want to really do something. “Some will invite their Muslim neighbors to a meal. Others will pray for persecuted Christians.” And if this happens, then he will regard his visit to the big event as truly worthwhile.

Downloads:

- Photos © ICF
- [Photo 1](#): Thomas Schirmmacher at Lunch Talk at the ICF Conference 2015
- [Photo 2](#): Tobias Teichen Pastor, ICF Munich, moderating Lunch Talk
- [Photo 3](#): During the discussion

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Text & Technology:

Titus Vogt (ViSdP)
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau
Phone: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 06
Fax: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 07
E-Mail: Titus.Vogt@bucer.de

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