

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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The Near East: Ideas for Establishing Civil Societies are Missing

Christine Schirmmacher speaks in an overfilled Lecture Hall at the University of Bonn's Dies Academicus

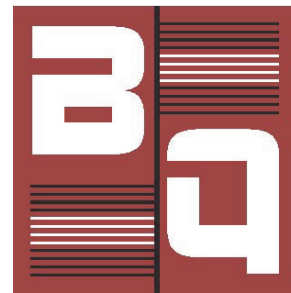
(Bonn, 08.07.2016) Before an audience of 250 in what was an overfilled Lecture Hall 9, Christine Schirmmacher, an Islamic Scholar at the University of Bonn, held a lecture at Dies Academicus 2016. The topic of the lecture was "The Near East as Contested Space and the 'Islamic State': A Confrontation with the West or a Sunni-Shiite Conflict?"



Christine Schirmmacher during her lecturing

According to Professor Schirmmacher, the current absence of the many factors required to raise hope in the region is distressing. In concrete terms, what is missing in the Near East are feasible concepts for establishing a civil society and for tolerating social and political pluralism. There are no ideas as to how to strike a peaceful balancing act and achieve just social participation between

ethnic and religious groups. There are also no ideas as to how to implement actual equality between men and women. And in many places there are no plans capable of consensus which have to do with a separation of state and religion. Women's rights and human rights, freedom of religion with the possibility of leaving Islam and turning to another religion, and forums for freedom of expression in the public square have also largely remained desiderata in the Near East after the Arab Spring. All of this produces a substrate for new forms of radicalism, for emigration from the region, or for violence publicly discharged through protests.



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The lecture used social and political developments beginning around 1900 in the region known as the Near East to substantiate this point of view. It also investigated the reasons for the failure of the Arab Spring and the unleashing of forces which led to the founding of the so-called “Islamic State.”

According to the speaker, the upheavels of the “Arab Spring“ beginning in 2010 awakened great hope in the MENA (Middle East Northern Africa) region for an extension of what were limited human rights, women’s rights, civil liberties as well as a democratization of the political systems which has not been realized in many places. Indeed, this has led to chaos and anarchy in a number of states in the Near East. The upheavals revealed a constant downward trend of dreadful political and social developments clearly traceable for at least the past 100 years. They also have revealed intense domestic and cross-denominational tensions, the causes of which reach all the way back to the emergence of Islam. Finally, they reveal a widely recognizable lack of any political idea for a polity capable of consensus as an alternative to autocratic regimes which were established after World War II with the development of nation states.

Downloads:

- [Photo 1](#), [Photo 2](#): Christine Schirmmacher during her lecturing

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