

Bonner Querschnitte

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BQ 537 – No. 20/2018

Syrian Orthodox Patriarch and WEA Representative spoke to 40 Grand Muftis or Ministers of Islamic Affairs from 25 countries

(Bonn, 29.06.2018) As was announced only now due to security reasons, the Syrian-Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II and the Associate Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance, Bishop Thomas Schirmmacher, two days before Christmas 2017 addressed the highest Muslim leaders of 40 countries and called upon them to protect their Christian minorities. They spoke at the the “2017 – Year of Islamic Solidarity: Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue” in Azerbaijan’s capital Baku.

The invitations came directly from the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and His Virtue Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, the highest ranking Muslim of Azerbaijan and the Grand Sheikh of the whole Caucasus region. They also

invited the Vatican, who was represented by a delegation under the leadership of the Maronite Patriarch, Moran Mor Bechara Boutros Cardinal al-Rahi, several Jewish leaders and a small group from other religions.

Here are some of the countries, which had sent their highest ranking Muslim representative or the minister for Islam and religious affairs:



Opening by the President of Azerbaijan © BQ/Warnecke

Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Morocco, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Egypt, Afghanistan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Palestine Authorities, Bosnia-Herzegovina, India, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, France, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Finland, Serbia,

In his speech, Schirmmacher said: “Some month ago I visited an old friend, the Grand Mufti of Lahore, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, in his huge mosque with sometimes up to 100.000 people praying there at the same time. But this time it was an official visit, as on behalf of the community of the World Evangelical Alliance and its 600 million members I thanked him for having stoped a large mob that wanted to burn Christians quarters in Lahore, and he did it at three different times, standing in their way and

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Titus Vogt (ViSdP)
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau
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telling them, that this is not the will of Allah. One time – and I heard this from several eye witnesses – the mob moved on and this brave and pious man of God said: If you want to kill them, you have to kill me first. The mob stopped. This is solidarity at its best!”

Schirmmacher also backed the declaration of his role model and friend Ignatius Aphrem II from Damascus, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch, officially the “Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Supreme Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church, Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II”, who in his speech said:

“In order for the followers of all religions to live in peace, we believe the following principles are of utmost importance:

Respect for every human being regardless of religion and race. God created us all equals because He loves us all, and no one should have the right to decide which of us is less human than the other, and which deserves to live or die.

Freedom of religion should be guaranteed for all human beings. God is the One who examines the hearts of human beings, and He is the One who decides to accept or reject our acts of worship.

The principle of equal citizenship should be upheld in our society. For this, a separation between the private religious lives of individuals and the public affairs of a nation should be clearly defined.

Knowledge about the other is paramount in ensuring peaceful co-existence, for ignorance of the other creates fear, fear creates isolation, and isolation leads to distrust, and eventually violence.

Dialogue on different levels is greatly needed to build trust among people of different faiths, especially among the youth. Such dialogue should focus on points of convergence and highlight common principles which contribute to the enhancement and betterment of the human life.”

This is what the conference said about itself: “The ‘2017 – Year of Islamic Solidarity: Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue’ international conference has kicked off in Baku. Co-organized by the Caucasus Muslims Office and the State Committee on Work with Religious Organizations, the conference marks the completion of the ‘Year of Islamic Solidarity’. Participants in the conference include state, religious figures and scientists from nearly 40 countries, heads and representatives of eight international organizations, special envoys of heads of states of a number of countries, heads of religious communities, members of governments, general public and parliaments, and representatives of the diplomatic corps.”



Bishop Schirmmacher addressing the audience © BQ/Warnecke

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Schirmmacher spoke with the following delegates

Muslim leaders

- His Virtue Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, Grand Sheikh of Aserbaidan, Chair of the Caucasus Muslim Board, Chariman of the Committee on Religious Asociations of Azerbaijan
- Shawki Ibrahim Allam, Grand Mufti of Egypt
- Ali Erbash, Head of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, Turkey
- Taufiq Al-Sudairy, First Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs fo Saudi Arabia
- Mohamed Aissa, Minister of Religious Affairs of Algeria
- Ali bin Abdurrahman Al-Hashim, Advisor (Minister) for Religious Affairs to the President of the United Arab Emirates
- Sheikh Ibrahim Khalil Awadallah, Deputy Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine
- Artukbek Yusupov, Chairman of the Religious Affairs Committee, Uzbekistan
- Sheikh Ahmed Tamim, Mufti of Ukraine
- Usmonkhon Alimov, Mufti of Uzbekistan
- Husein Kavazović, Grand Mufti (Reis ul-Ulema) of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mustafa Jusufspahic, Grand Mufti of Belgrade, Serbia

Jewish leaders

- Rabbi Yevdayev Milikh Ilhanonovich, Chairman of the “Religious Community of Mountain Jews” of Azerbaijan
- Rabbi Marc Scheier, President of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, USA
- Abraham Cooper, Dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, USA
- Malcom Hoenlein, CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisation, USA

Christian leaders

- Moran Mor Bechara Boutros Cardinal al-Rahi, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and head of the Maronite Church
- Rev. Monsignor Khaled Akasheh, Head of Department of Dialogue with Islam in the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Rome/Vatican
- Bishop Lennart Koskinen, Schweden

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- [Photo 1](#): Bishop Thomas Schirmmacher with the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shawki Ibrahim Allam © BQ/Warnecke
- [Photo 2](#): Bishop Thomas Schirmmacher welcomed by Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade © BQ/Warnecke
- [Photo 3](#): Bishop Thomas Schirmmacher and Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade at the far well reception of the conference in the palace of the Sheikh © BQ/Warnecke
- [Photo 4](#): Bishop Thomas Schirmmacher with the Chairman of the “Religious Community of Mountain Jews of Azerbaijan”, Rabbi Yevdayev Milikh Ilhanonovich © BQ/Warnecke
- [Photo 5](#): (from left) Ali bin Abdurrahman Al-Hashim, Bishop Thomas Schirmmacher, Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade © BQ/Warnecke
- [Photo 6](#), [photo 7](#), and [photo 8](#): Bishop Schirmmacher addressing the audience © BQ/Warnecke
- [Photo 9](#): Bishop Schirmmacher greeting the President of Asderbaidshchan, Ilham Aliyev © BQ/Warnecke
- [Photo 10](#): Bishop Schirmmacher and the Maronit Patriarch Moran Mor Bechara Boutros Cardinal al-Rahi © BQ/Warnecke
- [Photo 11](#): Opening by the President of Azerbaijan © BQ/Warnecke
- International Conference: “2017 – Year of Islamic Solidarity: Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue”: <http://islamic-solidarity-year2017.org/en/8/id-144>
- Opening Session of Baku Conference: 2017 Year of Islamic Solidarity: <http://syriacpatriarchate.org/2017/12/opening-session-of-baku-conference-2017-year-of-islamic-solidarity/>
- Speech of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch: <http://syriacpatriarchate.org/2017/12/speech-of-his-holiness-plenary-session-baku-conference-2017-year-of-islamic-solidarity/>

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