



ISHR NEWSLETTER

April 2019

IMPORTANT DATES

7 April

The Foundation of
the ISHR in
Frankfurt am Main

7 April

Day of Remembrance
for the Victims of the
Rwandan Genocide

18 April

Day of Remembrance
for all Victims of
Chemical Warfare

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

ISHR German Section and her 47th Annual General meeting

The German Section of the ISHR had their 47th Annual General Meeting, from the 6th to the 7th of April 2019, in Frankfurt am Main.

The meeting, convoked under the theme: "Educating, Helping and Recalibrating-Human Rights Engagement"; took moments

about documenting the human rights atrocities of terrorist groups like Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, the deprivations experienced by the Coptic Christians in Egypt, the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, the imprisonment of human rights activists in Iran and the violation of human



Mr. Edgar Lamm, the Chairman of the Board of the ISHR German section declaring the 47th Annual General Meeting open. © IGFM / ISHR

"Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must — at that moment — become the center of the universe."

Elie Wiesel

Article continues on next page ...

rights by the Chinese government. It also drew attention to the serious areas of work being done by the ISHR from the headquarters in Frankfurt. Dr. Carmen Krush-Grün, Mr. Khalil Al Rasho and Dr. Emmanuel Ogbunwezeh, all reported in their various areas of work, to the rapt attention and appreciation of the participants.

The meeting which was well attended, drew prominent attention; with the new Chairwoman of the CDU in the German Federal Parliament, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, sending a video message in felicitation. Michael Gahler the CDU member representing the Hessen in the European Union parliament; and Prof. Dr. Matthias Zimmer, member of the Human Rights Committee of the German parliament, both spoke at the occasion, welcoming the members and urging them not to relent in the fight for human rights. Among the witnesses, who testified to human rights abuses in various countries, were Maedi Soltani the daughter of the jailed Iranian Human Rights lawyer, Abdolfattah Soltani; Aneeqa Anthony of the Voice, from Pakistan, and Dr. Lubov Niecimnova from Moldavia.



The Chairperson of the CDU Mrs. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer delivering her video message to the participants © IGFM / ISHR

The participants at the end of 47th Annual General meeting, which came to a close on the 7th of April, rose with a resolution, urging the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Heiko Maas to appeal to the government of Iran for the immediate and unconditional release of the Human Rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh; whose imprisonment blatantly violates international law. We congratulate the ISHR German section for a successful meeting and set them up as an inspiration to all other sections, as we all strengthen our engagement for human rights across our various sections. This issue of the ISHR Newsletter seeks to reflect on the fruits of this meeting, with a few pictures and impressions of the meeting. You will also find highlights of the work the ISHR is doing in Albania through the excellent engagements of Katrin Börnmüller, and her indefatigable group from Wittlich. We also included articles on China, and some others. We present to you also the meeting of the ISHR president with the Catholicos of Armenia, as well as the upsurge in persecution of political opponents in Cuba.

We wish you all a very happy Easter celebrations.

*Thomas Schirrmacher, Prof. Dr.
President of the International Council of the ISHR*

FROM THE SECTIONS

ISHR Germany

Sights and Impressions from the ISHR Germany 47th Annual General Meeting



Mr. Edgar Lamm, the Chairman of the Board of the ISHR German section declaring the 47th Annual General Meeting open. © IGFM / ISHR



The Chairperson of the CDU in the German Federal Parliament, Mrs. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer delivering her video message to the participants. © IGFM / ISHR



During the major working session of the General meeting. From Left to Right: Karl Hafen (moderator), Dr. Carmen Krusch-Grün (Eastern Europe and Russian Expert), Khalil Al Rasho (Iraq and ISIS expert) Dr. Kerstin Holst (Dentist and humanitarian), and Dr. Emmanuel Ogbunwezeh, (Africa expert). © IGFM / ISHR



During Eye-witness to human rights violations session. From left to Right: Carmen Jondral Schule, (ISHR board member) Dimitr Rahr and Dr. Lubov Niemcinowa (ISHR Moldova). © IGFM / ISHR



Michael Gahler, European Parliamentarian delivering his message of goodwill. © IGFM / ISHR



Cross section of participants. © IGFM / ISHR

Albania

In Support of the MEK. Katrin Bornmüller visits the MEK Camp in Albania

Armenia Katrin Bornmüller, the honorary Chairperson of the Board of the ISHR, German section, in the company of Professor Margarita Kola, lawyer for international law / human rights, lawyer of the Mushahedin, chairman of the IGFM Albania, Sophia Beerbohm and were guests at the Mujahedin camp in Albania. At the entrance are sharpest controls, to prevent uninvited and dangerous guests gaining access into the camp.

The "Mojahedin E Khalq" – MEK was founded in 196 by three university professors in Iran. The MEK as an ideology believes in Islam and is the oldest and largest anti-fundamentalist Muslim group in the Middle East. Since its inception, the MEK has been slowly of ering a new credible interpretation of Islam, and the prospect of freedom, human rights, social justice, gender equality and respect for the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. The main difference between MEK's interpretation of Islam and that of Khomeni was that MEK's version is based on freedom, democratic rights of all citizens and secularism. Unlike the fundamentalists who consider the "vali-e-faqui" (Supreme Leader-the Supreme Leader) "God's representative on earth," the MEK insists that nothing is legitimate except through free elections. The MEK supports the free market economy. Already in 1900 there was a "Constitutional Revolution for Democratization" of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Iranians.



Katrin Bornmüller holding aloft pictures of two executed students, at the memorial at the Al Mojahedin Memorial event in Albania. December, 2018. © IGFM / ISHR

The MEK believes in a secular state, in a tolerant peaceful Islam, and are committed to the freedom and equality of women. They are strictly against the belief that only a virgin will go to heaven, which gives people the license, before an execution, that the victim must first be raped, so that she does not go to heaven. 30,000 people mostly MEK members, were executed in 1988. The others fled to many places including Iraq, where they founded the camp ASHRAF, on the border with Iran in Khalis. For their defense, they formed an army according to international conventions. MEK ended its military operations in June 2001, which is confirmed by independent and respectable sources. This is also confirmed in the report titled: *"Iran's Democratic Opposition, a Report from the City Camp Ashraf – A Detailed Examination of a Delegation of the European Parliament Regarding Several Thousand Opponents of the Iranian Regime at Camp Ashraf in the Iraqi Province of DIYALA-2009"*. MEK stood on the terrorist lists of the EU and the Americans. The courts in the UK, the EU and the US have removed them from the lists according to processes.

They had resisted the Iranian government for 14 years recording a very high casualty rate in the process. There is no dress code for women or men. The women all work as well as the men. The Chador, which is common in Iran, is not a fit apparel for work. Most women wear pantsuits, but they want to wear headscarves, they do not have to, they did not wear any in Iran. There is a bakery, a doctor's office, a canteen. The camp is a small town. At the entrance are strict controls, since Iran sends violent spies. We are convinced that the MEK deserves support, they are a hard-working community committed to democracy, freedom and human rights in Iran.

Katrin Bornmüller, ISHR Germany

Armenia

The ISHR President in an Audience with the Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian President

The ISHR President, Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher, was received by the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicos Karekin II, for an audience with his wife, the Bonn Islamic scholar Christine Schirrmacher, after they had commemorated the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian genocide from 1915 in the Genocide Memorial Complex Tsitsernakaberd in Yerevan. Christine Schirrmacher regularly lectures on this genocide at the University of Bonn.

The Catholicos was born in 1951, studied theology in Bonn from 1975, and was soon the spiritual representative of the then nine Armenian congregations in Germany, which is why he still speaks German today. In 1983 he became bishop, in 1992 archbishop. In 1999 he was elected 132nd Catholicos. In 2013 he was elected President of the World Council of Churches in Busan, Korea. Among other things the Catholicos spoke of a "German month", because before Schirrmacher Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and the EKD Council President Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm had paid their respects to the Catholicos. Schirrmacher first met the Catholicos at the inauguration of Pope Francis in Rome in 2013, then in Busan the same year at the WCC Assembly, and during his visit to Berlin, when the EKD had invited the heads of the Ancient Oriental churches to commemorate 500 years of Reformation. Very Rev. Fr. Shahe Ananyan, Director of the Ecumenical Relations Department of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin of the Armenian Apostolic Church, also took part in the discussion.

The programme also included a visit to the extensive renovation of the Mother Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which was built in 301- 303 and extended in 480, 618, and 1648. It is located in Vagharshapat, a city 18 km west of Yerevan, long known as the "holy city" or "spiritual capital of Armenia". Vagharshapat was the first capital of Armenia (AD 102- 330) and later again and again capital of Great Armenia, was often named after the seat of the church Etchmiadzin, and lost its importance at the beginning of the 20th century, but then grew enormously in the later Soviet period, and became a suburb of Yerevan. The Kingdom of Armenia under



*Prof. Schirrmacher meeting with the Catholicos of Armenia.
© BQ / Schirrmacher*



Mother Cathedral of Etchmiadzin © BQ / Schirrmacher

King Tiridates III (Thrad III) was the first state to adopt Christianity as its state religion, 301/303 or 315 AD. Christianity in Armenia probably goes back to the work of the apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus, even if historical sources are missing. The Armenian Church belongs to the seven ancient oriental churches which were formerly called "monophysites" by the western and eastern churches and accused of heresy. In the meantime this designation is considered wrong, and the self-designation "Miaphysites" is used. It is common knowledge that the theological differences arose from a different use of the word for "nature" (greek "physis") in relation to Jesus Christ, but that all churches confess together that the one Jesus as person of the triune God is both true God and true man.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Arbitrary arrests in Cuba

At least 405 arbitrary detentions in Cuba were recorded by the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), headquartered in Frankfurt am Main, in February. That was more than twice as many as in the previous month. The ISHR sees the arrests in connection with the repression of the government against activists who voted no or absented in the recent constitutional referendum. In addition to arrests, the repressions included house searches, confiscation of work equipment, fines, house arrests and violent attacks on human rights activists and independent election observers. The most common incidents of this kind were in the provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Havana and Matanzas. Among the most independent organizations targeted by the arrests were the opposition Ladies in white. "We blame the government of Miguel Díaz-Canel for the growing repression of independent activists," said IGFM leader Edgar Lamm, adding that almost a year after Díaz-Canel became head of state, the repression of civil society has continued unabated. The Constitutional referendum process shows that the Cuban Communist Party is more interested in reinforcing the repression and not the reform process.



*Edgar Lamm,
Chairman of the Board, ISHR Germany*

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