



ISHR NEWSLETTER

August 2019

IMPORTANT DATES

9 August

International Day of
World Indigenous
Peoples

12 August

International Youth
Day

19 August

International
Humanitarian Day

23 August

International Day for
Remembrance of
Slavery and Its
Abolition

“Through love, tribes have been intermixing colors to reveal a new rainbow world. And as more time passes, this racial and cultural blending will make it harder for humans to side with one race, nation or religion over another”

– Suzy Kassem,
Rise up and Salute the Sun

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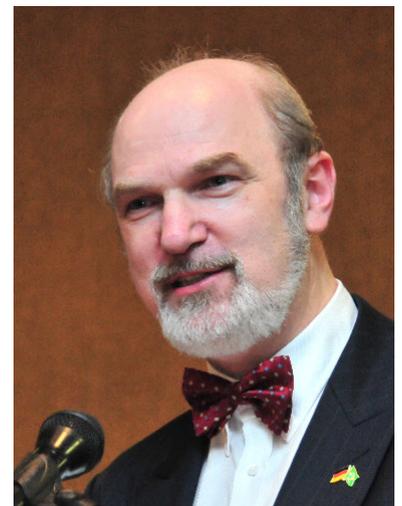
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EDITORIAL

Dear ISHR Family,

As you all can see, the August edition of our ISHR Newsletter is coming out in September, with the September edition following quickly on its heels. This is due to the fact that the ISHR Germany was snowed under, with preparations to leave the old office complex at Borsigallee 9 in Frankfurt, and move into a new one at Edison Strasse 5, in Frankfurt.



Article continues on next page ...

This move was a logistics complexity, which the German section mastered with uncommon finesse. That undoubtedly, disrupted normal working conditions and made it nigh impossible to get the Newsletter out in good time.

The editorial team thanks the ISHR Germany's board, and the members, who contributed greatly to the success of that move. We thank in a very special way, Mr. Khalil Bonzai, who took charge of moderating the renovation of the new office complex, and making it fit for moving in. We thank Mr. Heinz Ernst, who also put in great work in that regard. We would never forget the great sacrifices of Mrs. Karin Müller-Kinet, who worked indefatigably to ease the move. Karl Hafen, in spite of his eye problems, took time off to read most of the files in the archives as to see what could be taken over to the new complex and what should visit the shredding machine. Georg Scherf was also great in this regard. We thank all the workers at the IGFH headquarters for their efforts. We forget no one!

In this edition, we serve you articles and project reports from Ecuador, and the Caucasus. We praise the efforts of our own very dear Dr. Carmen Krush-Grün, whose great efforts has ensured that the Eastern Europe project continues to be financed by the German Foreign office. The wonderful video of the conference in Georgia, which we reported here, could be seen on the project website humanrights-online.org. We also thank the Chairman of the ISHR Germany board, Mr. Edgar Lamm, for superintending the project in Ecuador. The report of that project is included in this edition. The ISHR President, Prof. Dr. Schirmmacher, has been on the move as is usual. He has visited many countries in furtherance and defense of human rights. We bring you a few reports in that regard. We have an article on the xenophobic violence going on in South Africa at the moment.

Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher

President of the International Council of the ISHR

Emmanuel Onyemaechi Ogbunwezeh, Ph.D.

Managing Editor

THE PRESIDENT'S SUITE

The ISHR President throws his support behind the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations in Liberia

The ISHR President, Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher, who also doubles as the Deputy General Secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance for Theological Issues, was keynote speaker at the 32nd General Assembly of the Liberia Council of Churches. He was asked to answer the question of whether Christians and churches should support the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For security reasons, the trip has only now been announced.



The chairman of the Liberia Council of Churches, Bishop Kortu K. Brown, invited Prof. Schirmacher to visit Liberia when the 17 SDGs were adopted and to discuss the SDGs with the church leaders. In Liberia, questions about the UN are emotionally charged, as 14 years of UN peacekeepers have been stationed in the country since the end of the 15-year civil war and their success or failure is fiercely discussed. The Evangelical Alliance of Liberia strongly supported Schirmacher's visit to the Liberia Council of Churches.

Schirmacher argued that while Christians are convinced that the causes of many of the problems identified by the SDGs, such as racism and corruption, are much deeper, this does not change the fact that the goals themselves are to be welcomed by Christians and all men of goodwill. He made the case that that racism, corruption, discrimination or contempt for women, for example, cannot only be overcome by external factors, but that a profound conversion of the whole personality is decisive for it. But the state could not create or force such a conversion and had to provide for external justice.



Both photos: Prof. Dr. Schirmacher in Liberia © BQ/Warnecke

According to Schirmacher, the 17 sustainability goals of the UN itself are hardly affected by ideology, which does not always apply to the 169 proposals and their implementation. The alternative, however, could only be to actively work for better ways to achieve the goal, but not just to comment on the events like viewers of a cinema film.

Just as in any country we can only work with the government we actually have, not with the government we would like it to have, so too must the United Nations, which must be open about its mistakes and shortcomings. There are of course demands for reforms, but that does not change the fact that it is currently the only way to work together politically worldwide for good goals.

FROM THE SECTIONS

ISHR Ecuador

ISHR Media Project in Ecuador

Ecuador was under an authoritarian rule from 2007 to 2017, under President Rafael Correa. The media landscape also suffered massively as a result. Due to massive political and legal restrictions, the sector fell into a crisis. A number of newspapers and radio stations completely disappeared from the market. Others were nationalized.

The Fundamedios Foundation (Fundación Andina para la Observación y Estudio de Medios) documented 300 to 400 violations of freedom of expression and media by state authorities every year. These include the persecution of social media activists, the censorship of content on the Internet, the press, radio and television stations, as well as the closure of the media and the confiscation of their inventory. Journalists were more frequently prosecuted.

The basis for the persecution of the media was the Communications Act (Ley de Comunicación). It was implemented by the Superintendencia de Información y Comunicación (Supercom), a censorship authority set up specifically for this purpose.

All these took a turn for the better in May 2017, when there was a change of government in Ecuador. President Correa could not run again for office. The former Vice President Lenín Moreno was elected as his successor. Contrary to all expectations, the new president turned out to be reform-oriented and willing to engage in dialogue.

During this reform phase, the ISHR 2018/2019, together with Fundamedios and with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), led and implemented the project on: The Promotion of Freedom of Expression and Media in Ecuador.



Participants at the ISHR Media Project in Ecuador

The project goals were as follows:

The project goals were as follows:

- Promotion of freedom of expression and freedom of the media
- Support for reform efforts (Communications Act)
- Promotion of Young Journalists
- Strengthening the independent media sector

The project was successfully carried out. It trained 276 journalists and social communicators. The close cooperation with the universities should be emphasized.

- Universidad de las Américas (Quito)
- Cotopaxi University of Technology
- Catholic University of Quito.

The project had a positive influence on the reform of the communications law, which has since been passed by parliament. The return to democracy was promoted and enhanced in this way.

Edgar Lamm
Board Chairman, ISHR Germany

ISHR Georgia

Great Resonance to the “Media, opinion-formation, human rights” Seminar in Tbilisi

On 3 August 2019, the Georgian section of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), held a seminar in Tbilisi on the theme, “Media, Opinion Making, and Human Rights”. The seminar was part of a cross-border project of all Eastern Partnership countries and Russia, to promote civil society ties between these countries and Germany. It is supported by the German Foreign Office, for which we are very grateful.

The moderator of the seminar was Avtandil Davitaija, President of the Georgian Section of the ISHR. Temur Tschilatschaba and project assistant Gennadij Kaunow, who had travelled from Moldova, both spoke on the theme of the seminar. The organizers of the meeting were A. Davitaija, Georgi Mikava and Georgi Patsatsija.

The seminar was attended by Journalists, representatives of non-governmental organizations, bloggers, professors of leading Georgian universities, the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia, the President of the Sukhum-Abkhazian Academy of Sciences and students of leading Georgian universities. There were 25 participants and guests, a total of 32 people. It is important to note that young people from the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia came to participate in the seminar regardless of the risk of closed checkpoints. During the seminar the lecturer Temur Chilachaba, doctor of physical and mathematical sciences, spoke about the situation in the media, information wars, activities of so-called trolls and bots. Subsequently, the seminar participants discussed the topics covered in the report.

The four-hour seminar focused on the question of human rights in the occupied territories of Georgia—Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Ossetian seminar participants, who had arrived from the Occupied Territories stated that all basic human rights in the Occupied Territories were violated, particularly the right to life, to freedom of movement, and right to work. They are forbidden to take part in elections and even to learn in their Georgian mother tongue in schools. They reported that they live in constant fear.

The conference was attended by many young people, who actively participated in the discussions. The participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the subject of an ARD broadcast, which claimed that Abkhazia had joined Georgia at the beginning of the 20th century. This was wrong and is disinformation. The participants also addressed the issue of educational problems. Also speaking at the seminar were the president of the Georgian section of the ISHR, Avtandil Davitaija, project assistant, Gennady Kaunov, the deputy chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Abkhazia Tamaz Khubua, the chairman of the Sukhum Abkhazian Academy of Sciences, Otar Zhordanija. All participants of the seminar were allowed to have their say.

The discussion at the seminar was very productive and significant. The participants expressed their wish to participate actively in the work of the ISHR. Two further seminars will be held in Georgia in the Imeretia and Mingrelia regions.



Participants at the Seminar in Tblisi



Participants at the Seminar in Tblisi

Dr. phil. Carmen Krusch-Grün
Director, Eastern Europe, ISHR

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Africa

Victims of Xenophobia Abroad, Culprits of Xenophobia at Home

The mindless xenophobic violence against Nigerians and other African immigrants in South Africa is igniting social media conversation about what one might call global Naijaphobia, that is, the mass resentment of Nigerians in many parts of the world. We are now increasingly stereotyped worldwide as rude, boisterous, tastelessly showy, domineering, and criminally inclined.

From Euro-America to Asia, from Southern Africa to East Africa, and even in other West African countries, many people judge Nigerians by the attitudinal excesses and moral indiscretions of a minority of us. Nevertheless, amid the righteous indignation that this admittedly unfair reality provokes in us, we need to realize that we are also culprits of internal xenophobia within our national space.

In Nigeria, moral transgressions are habitually territorialized and ethnicized. Northern Muslims are routinely stereotyped as terrorists. Nigerians from the East are pigeonholed as inescapably prone to fraudulent schemes like 419 and drug trafficking. Nigerians from the West are typecast as a cowardly, traitorous lot who are given to ritual murders and credit card frauds. Northern Christians and southern ethnic minorities are branded as lazy, good-for-nothing drunkards. And so on.

To be sure, unkind stereotypical generalizations about people are conventional parts of the human perceptual process. They are not necessarily always activated by premeditated ill will. They are just a part of our visceral, unschooled perceptual guidelines that psychologists call our schemata. The untutored human mind has a cognitive need for what is called chronically accessible constructs, which help us make snap, effortless judgments about people. Nevertheless, the body of stereotypes we build about people through our chronically accessible constructs can be—in fact often are—faulty, over-generalized, and primary reasons for the distortion of reality.

Negative, inaccurate cognitive schemata become particularly problematic if they formally inform public policy. For instance, about the same time that Nigerians were justifiably hyperventilating on social media over xenophobic fury on their compatriots in South Africa, the Lagos State government arrested 123 Nigerians from Jigawa State who relocated to Lagos in a truck with their motorcycles in search of better economic opportunities.

The Lagos State government accused them of the non-existent crime of “illegal mass movement”! In an August 31 tweet, the Lagos State government announced the “Arrest of illegal mass movement of Okada riders to Lagos from the North jointly coordinated by the State Commissioner for The Environment and Water Resources, Mr Tunji Bello and his Transportation counterpart, Dr. Abimbola Oladehinde.”

Ignore the monstrous grammar for a moment. What law of the land justifies what the Lagos State Government did? [Chapter 4, Section 41](#) of the Nigerian Constitution states that, “Every citizen of Nigeria is entitled to move freely throughout Nigeria and to reside in any part thereof,

and no citizen of Nigeria shall be expelled from Nigeria or refused entry thereby or exit therefrom.”

So what was the legal basis for the Lagos State government’s initial arrest of the Okada riders from Jigawa? A newspaper editor from the South who supported the unconstitutional arrest and detention of the 123 Jigawa Okada riders argued that the action was justified in light of the rampant terrorism in the Muslim North and the crippling anxieties in the South about the creeping incursion of this virus into their region. There are three fundamental problems with this reasoning.

One, that assumption rests on the notion that the South is an unblemished, crime-free El Dorado. It's not. Criminals from the South also go to the North. Some crimes are more prevalent in the South than they are in the North. The fact that one region has one sort of crime and not the other is no reason to engage in invidious stereotypical generalization of one or the other. No crime is more acceptable than the other is.

Two, if state governments in parts of Nigeria can invoke the crimes prevalent in other parts of the country as justification to violate the constitutionally guaranteed right to movement of some Nigerians, what moral right do we have to resent being negatively stereotyped and violated abroad on account of the crimes of a minority of our compatriots? It’s the same logic.

Three, the 123 people the Lagos State government illegally arrested (and later released) putatively on suspicion of being terrorists are from Jigawa State. Since the Boko Haram insurgency started in 2009, there are scarcely, if any, terrorist attacks in Jigawa.

The North is not one monolithic, undifferentiated region. The fact that there is terrorism in the northeast is no reason to assume that every Northern Muslim, including one from outside the Northeast, is a terrorist. That’s ethnic profiling.

Incidentally, the Lagos State Government appeared to have inadvertently admitted that it indeed “profiled” the Okada riders from Jigawa. Gbenga Omotoso, Lagos State’s Commissioner for Information & Strategy, in a press statement designed to dispel the impression that the 123 Hausa travelers who were arrested by the Lagos State government were targeted because of their ethnic identity, said, “The arrested suspects have been moved to the State Police Command where they are being profiled.”

When law enforcement officers “profile” people, it means they are judging the people because of their ethnicity, race, religion, etc. instead of their actual conduct. I’m not sure that was the meaning Omotoso intended to convey because it contradicts the core claim of his press release. Was it a Freudian slip or just plain ignorance? Or both?

Well, a friend from the South who is close to Lagos State government officials confided in me that the arrest of the 123 men from Jigawa was just political theatre carefully calculated to purchase and win back lost political capital for the Bola Tinubu political camp in the southwest.



A South African mob on hunt for foreigners

This was necessitated, he said, by Tinubu's insensitive and impolitic "[where are the cows?](#)" remark in the aftermath of the brutal murder of Afenifere leader Rueben Fazoranti's daughter, which has caused Tinubu to be seen in the Southwest as a shamelessly thoughtless lackey of the Fulani.

If this is true—and I have no reason to doubt that it's true—how is this different from South African politicians playing up negative stereotypes of Nigerians to stir up xenophobic violence against Nigerian immigrants in South Africa?

Interestingly, the Naijaphobic hysteria in South Africa and the Hausaphobic profiling of poor Okada drivers in Lagos are fairly coextensive with another enduring strand of Nigeria's many bigotries: religious intolerance. Inaccurate reports that alleged that Rivers State governor Nyesom Wike had destroyed a mosque in Port Harcourt also helped to magnify the Muslim North's own hypocrisy and unflattering record of religious intolerance.

Tearing down of churches and refusal to grant permits to build churches is a persistent problem in the North's so-called Sharia states. Ironically, it's precisely the people who have destroyed churches, who have refused to grant permission for churches to be built, or who have cheered the persecution of Christians that are taking umbrage at the unusual news of the demolition of a mosque in Port Harcourt.

A Kano-based Facebooker by the name of Ibrahim Sanyi-Sanyi captured the hypocrisy and duplicity of the arrowheads of the Northern Muslim anger brigade against the "demolition" of a mosque in Port Harcourt [when he wrote](#): "When Shekarau was the Governor from 2003–2011, billboards warning visitors 'Kano garin Sharia ne' [Kano is Islamic Sharia state] were erected at strategic locations leading to Kano Metropolitan City. Furthermore, churches were razed down including Christ the King Church (CKC) in Naibawa, Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) in Giginyu and HEKAN (Combined Churches of Christ) Church in Rogo Local Government Area (LGA)

"Now, Malam Shekarau, out of political expediency and with obvious intention to ride on general sentiments, has lashed out on Governor Wike for saying 'Rivers is a Christian State' and for 'demolishing of mosque' which are similar divisive stuff that happened under him as a Governor."

Similarly, even when predominantly Christian universities like the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, have had spaces for mosques on their campuses almost since their founding, federal universities in Kano, Sokoto, etc. that are funded by oil wealth from the Christian South have no churches. That's unacceptable Christophobia. So while we condemn Naijaphobia abroad, let's also reflect on our own local phobias at home.

Farooq A. Kperogi, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Journalism and Emerging Media
at the Kennesaw State University, Georgia USA

Contact Information

Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte
Deutsche Sektion e.V.
Borsigallee 9, 60486 Frankfurt am Main (Germany)

Editor: Thomas Schirmmacher
Managing Editor: Emmanuel Ogbunwezeh (afrika@igfm.de)
Assistant Editor: Martin Warnecke