

**Bürgerkrieg in Syrien-  
Religiös-politische Perspektiven zu den Entwicklungen im syrischen  
Konflikt**

**Civil war in Syria –  
(religio-)political perspectives on the development in the Syrian conflict**

-A closed conference in Loccum und Berlin –

Hosted by the Protestant Academy Loccum in conjunction with the German Federal Foreign Office

November, 3-5 2014 in Loccum and November, 6-7 2014 in Berlin

**Chair:**

*Jörg Armbruster, Journalist, SWR*

*Dr. Stephan Schaede, director of the Protestant Academy Loccum*

*George Khoury, Journalist, Bergheim*

*Prof. Dr. Martin Tamcke, professor of ecumenical theology, Göttingen*

*Waseem Haddad, religious scholar, Wien*

*Noomi Peter, student of peace and conflict research, Marburg*

**I. Overview**

<b>date</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Nov., 3	<b>1. The relevance of religious groups in the region – the status quo and development opportunities</b>
Nov., 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Political starting point / background to and relevance of religion</li> <li>b. Religious groups and their part in the conflict in Syria</li> <li>c. Future prospects</li> </ul>
Nov., 4	<b>2. The significance of the aid organisations / NGO's to address the crisis in Syria</b>
Nov., 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The role of the aid organisations / background</li> <li>b. Local civil society</li> <li>c. Effects, significance and limits of the aid organisations' work</li> <li>d. International interests</li> </ul>
Nov., 5	<b>3. The interstate relationships between Syria and neighbouring regions, with special regard to the relationships between Syria and Lebanon</b> <i>the foreign members' of delegation transit to Berlin</i>
Nov., 6	<b>4. The significance of German (foreign) policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The broad lines of German foreign policy in Syria</li> <li>b. Instruments and support measures (inter alia, Syria Recovery Trust Fund, support of national civil activities, AKBP)</li> <li>c. Humanitarian Aid</li> <li>d. Policy on refugees and migration (the programme of reception of refugees and displaced persons / Humanitarian admission programme Syria by the German Federal Government)</li> </ul>



## II. Main questions

The main questions are divided into four issues:

### Issue 1: The relevance of religious groups regarding the status quo and the developments opportunities

#### a. A first approach to the situation in Syria and its backgrounds

- i. In Syria's tradition, different religious groups have been existing side by side. Which of these relationships are endangered to get lost by the actual conflicts?
  1. Was there / Has it been really an religious peace under the leadership of Assad?
- ii. Which aims do the political forces pursue, which are not related to religious policy?
- iii. How is the loss of influence of the opposition to be assessed?
- iv. How strongly are the different opposition movements shaped by different groups?
- v. To what extend will military actions be accepted as a solution of the conflict? Is there hope for a political solution?

#### b. Religious groups and their part in the conflict in Syria

- i. Whether or to what extend have the different religious groups influence on the conflict? Are you confronted with inaccurate ascriptions? If so – please explain in which way.
- ii. How do the religious groups define their own position and how much influence do they have on Syrian politics and on the border areas?

*Note: The aim is to reflect the differences between positions of groups inside and outside Syria.*
- iii. What kind of support have religious groups among the population and how can they built up their support?
- iv. How do Islamic groups position themselves in relation to radical groups (ISIS; Nusra)?
- v. In which cases did the religious institutions fail, trying to resolve the conflict? And what were the reasons of the failure? In the future, which part should or could the religious institutions play in the conflict?

#### c. Future prospects

- i. How should we respond to a religious “confessionalism” and how could / should religious leaders get involved in this attempt?
- ii. In which way could Christians and Muslims cooperate to strengthen the social cohesion in Syria?
- iii. From connivance to tolerance and respect for human rights of all people: What kind of chances are there for a relative and also legal equality of various religious groups in Syria? What can be done to ensure that in a future Syria the right to religious freedom and also the right to freedom of expression will be respected and safeguarded? Who could be able to make a meaningful contribution to build a new order, established on the basis of human rights? What kind of old and new forms of discrimination will be feared by whom and how could this problem be addressed?

Please consider the following questions:

1. How is the strongly humiliated Sunni Islam treated in Syria?

2. Who will show understanding for the human rights of members of religious groups in Syria which have not been officially accepted yet? (for example the Yazidis, but also Buddhists, Hindus – a problem which has affected most of all migrant workers)
  3. Is it possible to delete the provision of the Syrian Constitution which says that the president has to share the Muslim faith? (Art. 3(1) of the Constitution of 27.02.2012)
  4. What impact has secularism on the region; which concepts of interreligiosity could be envisaged?
  5. What are the prognoses for Syrian families which family members belong to different religious groups? What kind of perspectives are there for people in Syria who are not attached to a religious group at all?
- iv. Which concrete possibilities of influence do movements of opposition have? What kind of political relevance do they have?
  - v. What kind of chances for reconciliation across all boundaries are there? How could this circle of mutual prejudices and fears be broken?
  - vi. Is there still a civil rights movement in the parts of Syria which are in the hands of the rebels?
  - vii. Is there a way of supporting that movement?

## **2. Issue 2: The significance of the aid organisations / NGO's to address the crisis in Syria**

### **a. The role of the aid organisations / background**

- i. Which aid organisations are de facto active in Syria / in Lebanon?
- ii. Which institutions are actively involved in Syria / in the border region?
- iii. By whom has the aid organisations been supported?

### **b. Local civil society**

- i. Which NGO's / aid organisations are originally based in this region and which are currently developing there?
- ii. Which interests of the NGO's / the aid organisations are determinant for the engagement of the local people?

### **c. Effects, significance and limits of the aid organisations' work**

- i. To what extent is possible to provide humanitarian support – especially in regard of dealing with flows of refugees?
- ii. Do the NGO's have any access at all to the internally displaced persons?
- iii. With what kind of problems and obstacles have the aid organisations NGO's been faced?
- iv. ICRC and Caritas are cooperating with the ministries in Damascus. How would you assess their work? (And is it at all an option to cooperate with the Assad regime?)
- v. What could Germany contribute to support the aid organisations' work?

### **d. International interests**

- i. How do the German NGOs find themselves? –And how does the German Federal Foreign Office support the German NGO's? What kind of financial support or legal assistance does it offer?
- ii. In which way does the EU put effort into this field of work and how is this commitment coordinated with the German commitment?
- iii. Towards the realisation of what kind of objectives in the area of Syria does the NGO's of the Gulf states work?

In relation to issue 1:

**3. Issue 3: The interstate relationships between Syria and its neighbouring regions, with special regards to the relationship between Syria and Lebanon**

- a. How is the Lebanon affected by the Syrian conflict? And what influence does this have on the relationship between Syria and the Lebanon?
- b. What is the significance of Lebanese organisations in Syria? (for example the Hezbollah)
- c. How deep is the division within Lebanon between those who support Assad and those who reject Assad?
- d. What kind of developments could be expected taking the exertion of influence on Syria by neighbouring countries in account? (for example by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran or Irak)
  - i. What interests are called their own by these countries?
  - ii. Which geopolitical interests do they pursue?
  - iii. Are they interested in a call for a ceasefire?
  - iv. What is the reaction of „the West“ to his certain kind of commitment?
- e. How is the situation of the Syrian refugees in the Lebanon to be assessed? What kind of support is needed by political forces and other groups in the Lebanon?

**November, 6 2014 in Berlin:**

**4. Issue 4: The significance of German (foreign) policy**

- a. Which are the broad lines of German foreign policy in Syria?
- b. What kind of instruments and support measures (inter alia, Syria Recovery Trust Fund, support of national civil activities, AKBP) are available?
- c. Humanitarian Aid: what measures have been taken to provide humanitarian aid? Which difficulties do arise? Which perspectives and future prospects do emerge?
- d. Policy on refugees and migration: What kind of programmes of reception of refugees and displaced persons have been set up by the German Federal Government? (Humanitarian admission programme Syria by the German Federal Government)

On a meta level, during the conference, the following perspective on regional transformation processes should be always kept in mind:

**In view of the current situation in Syria: Has there been a rebellion at all, in the strict meaning of the word? Why is the threat so severe that the rebellion will not have any effect on this area?**

### III. Agenda

(For a detailed listing of all guests invited for the conference, cf. IV.)

#### Preliminary Note concerning the procedure:

- *To allow an open and critical debate, the conference is a closed colloquium. On equal terms, each conference participant will be invited to express his or her views.*
- *The short keynote speeches do intended to provoke discussion providing a specific perspective of experience (each of these keynote speeches shall not take more than 7-10 minutes). We want to express our appreciation to everyone giving a keynote speech during the conference.*
- *Because so many of our guest would have been very suitable for this task, you could say that the selection was more or less arbitrary. The conference will focus on the open debate, therefore it is guaranteed that the view of every guest will be heard.*
- *At the end of each debate, we would like to combine the results, so they can be used as basis for the talks in Berlin.*

November, 3 2014

#### Evening Session:

**till 18:30**      **Arrival in Loccum. Registration**

**18:30**            **Dinner**

**19:30**            **Stephan Schaede, Martin Tamcke and George Khoury**  
**Opening of the Conference**  
**Introduction**

#### **Welcome Addresses:**

OLKR Rainer Kiefer, Church Office of Hannover

OKR Martin Prühn, Vicar of the Bishop for ecumenical relations for the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

Matthias Kopp, German Bishops' Conference

**20:00**            **1. The relevance of religious groups regarding the status quo and the development opportunities:**  
**1a. A first approach to the situation in Syria and its backgrounds**  
(including i – tradition of dealing with religious groups)

#### *Speaker*

Bishop Elias Toumeh, Greek Orthodox Bishop in Wady al Nasara and Professor of Theology, Blamand University  
Sheikh Sheikh Riad Suleman Al Hmod  
Kemal Sido, Society of threatened people

- Moderated Discussion -

**21.30**            **Informal exchange in the gallery**

**November, 4 2014**

**08:15**            **Morning prayers**  
**Breakfast**

**09:30**            **1a. Religious policy in Syria (cf. ii.-iv.)**

*Speaker:*

Prof. Dr. Najib Awad, Christian Theology, Hartford Seminary  
Shabo Talay, Linguist, FU Berlin  
Dr. Otmar Öhring, KAS, Amman

- Moderated Discussion -

**10:45**            **1b. Religious groups and their part in the conflict in Syria**

*Speaker:*

Aref Dalila, Economist, Dubai  
Dr. Thomas Volk, Advisor, Konrad Adenauerstiftung, Berlin  
Prof. Dr. Martin Tamcke, Ecumenic theology, Oriental church history and  
missionary history, Göttingen  
Tareq Aziziyeh, Researcher

- Moderated Discussion -

**12:30**            **Lunch**

**14:00**            **1c. Further prospects (Part 1): equal treatment for religions in Syria**

*Speaker:*

Hind Aboud Kabawat, Attorney/ Senior Program Officer for Syria, United  
States Institute of Peace  
Assaad Kattan, Orthodox Theology, Münster

- Moderate Discussion -

**15:15**            **Coffee Break**

**15:45**            **1c. Further prospects (Part 2): possibilities of influence by the opposition /  
Is there any hope of reconciliation?**

*Speaker:*

Bishop Elias Toumeh , Greek Orthodox bishop  
in Wady al Nasara and Professor of Theology, Balamand University  
Michel Schammas, Lawyer  
Salam Kawakibi, Researcher



- Moderated discussion -

**17:15**            **1c. Further prospects (Part 3):  
Civil right movements**

*Speaker:*

Usama Felix Darrah, Syrian national committee, Heidelberg/Berlin  
Dr. Naseef Naeem, Zenith Council, Berlin

- Moderated discussion -

**18:30**            **Dinner**

**19:30**            **2 a + b. The significance of the aid organisations / NGO's to address the  
crisis in Syria:  
The role of the aid organisations / background  
Local civil society**

*Speaker:*

Rupert Neudeck, Grünhelme e.V.  
Dr. Marwan Khoury, physician, founder of the aid organisation Barada –  
Syrienhilfe e.V.  
Dr. Bernhard Felmborg, Department chief, BMZ, Berlin  
Mirjam Roller, Bread for the world, Berlin  
Marie-Therese Kiriaky, founder and chairman of the Association of Arab  
Women in Vienna

- Moderated discussion -

**- Informal exchange in the gallery -**

**November, 5 2014**

**08:15**            **Morning prayers  
Breakfast**

**09:30**            **2c. Effects, significance and limits of the aid organisations' work**

*Speaker:*

Matthias Vogt, Missio, Aachen  
Uwe Gräbe, Advisor for Middle East and chief executive Evangelischer Verein  
für die Schneller Schulen e.V. (EVS)

- Moderated discussion -

**11:00**            **2d. International interests**

*Speaker:*

Daniel Gerlach, Journalist  
Petra Becker, SWP, Berlin

- Moderated Discussion -

**12:30 Lunch**

**14:30 3a - d. The interstate relationships between Syria and its neighbouring regions, with special regards the relationship between Syria and Lebanon**

*Speaker:*

Jörg Armbruster, Journalist  
Martin Glasenapp, Medico International, Frankfurt am Main  
Martin Durm, SWR, Stuttgart

**16:00-16:30 -Moderated Discussion  
Closing debate -**

**Departure**

**November, 6 2014 Berlin**

Official Program will be designed by members of the German Federal Foreign office (Katrin Misera-Lang; Samy Sofian Saadi und Peer Koelling); see attachment.

Leading questions: See above issue 4.S

Statements and discussion tabels with (among others):

- German Federal Foreign office: - - Minister of State:  
Maria Böhmer
- Experts of the (religio)political Department and  
Department of Near/ Middle East
- Department head of the Federal ministry of Economic  
Cooperation and Development
- Members of the German Parliament

**7. November 2014 in Berlin**

- After breakfast: Meeting with members of „Adopt the revolution/about change e.V.“.

- Departure

## IV. Conference participants

*From the Syrian context:*

1. Bischof Armash Nalbandian, Bishop of the Armenian Church, Primate of the Diocese of Damascus, Damascus (confirmed)
2. Bishop Elias Toumeh , Greek Orthodox bishop in Wady al Nasara and Professor of Theology, Balamand University (confirmed)
3. Marie-Thérèse Kiriaky, founder and chairman of the Association of Arab women in Vienna (confirmed)
4. Hind Abboud Kabawat, Syrian attorney and women’s rights campaigner, Washington, D.C. USA (confirmed)
5. Aref Dalila, Syrian economist, Syrian opposition figure and member if the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change in Syria, Dubai (confirmed)
6. Sheikh Riad Sulemann Al Hmod, Syrian opposition figure and member if the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change in Syria, Kairo (confirmed)
7. Mouhamad Berro, Syrian Activist, Head of the Science centre “Saida”, Turkey (confirmed)
8. Wael Sawah, Executive Director of “The Day after Association”, Turkey (confirmed from 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014)
9. Salam Kawakibi, Syrian researcher and writer, president of Initiative for a New Syria and deputy director - research director oft the The Arab Reform Initiative, Damascus (confirmed)
10. Michal Schammas, Syrian lawyer, writer and human rights activist, Beirut/Damascus (confirmed)
11. Waseem Haddad , Master of religious studies, Vienna (confirmed)
12. Prof. Dr. habil. Najib Awad, Associate Professor of Christian Theology Director of the PhD Program Hartford Seminary, USA (confirmed)
13. Hervin Osé, a member of the minority Kurdish Future Movement Party in Syria (tbc)
14. Faek Hawjeh, lawyer, from Salamieh, Bremen (tbc)

15. Tareq Aziziyeh, Syrian researcher and writer, Damascus (confirmed)
16. Yara Fares, women's rights activists, Damascus (confirmed)
17. Najib Abu I-Fakher, Syrian Activist; Ankara (confirmed)
18. Usama Felix Darrah, Politologe, Vertreter der Nationalkoalition, Heidelberg/Berlin (tbc)
19. Amil Gorgis, Representative of the Syr. Orthodox. Church, Berlin (confirmed)
20. Telim Tolan, Head of the Central Council of Yezidi in Germany, (confirmed)

*Representatives of German-speaking institutes of the churches:*

- 1.) Oberkirchenrat Martin Prühn, Vicar of the Bishop for ecumenical relations for the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) (confirmed)
- 2.) OLKR Rainer Kiefer, Church Office of Hannover (confirmed)
- 3.) Matthias Kopp, spokesman for the German Bishop's conference (confirmed)
- 4.) Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Reinbold, Member of Islam Department, Church Office of Hannover (confirmed)

*Scientists*

- 1.) Prof. Dr. Martin Tamcke, Göttingen (confirmed)
- 2.) Prof. Dr. Assaad Elias Kattan, Münster (confirmed)
- 3.) Prof. Dr. Shabo Talay, Berlin (confirmed)
- 4.) Dr. Naseef Naeem, GIZ and Zenith Council, Berlin (tbc)
- 5.) Dr. Ke(a)mal Sido, Orientalist (confirmed)
- 6.) Petra Becker, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Berlin (confirmed)
- 7.) Dr. Fritz Erich Anhelm, Loccum (confirmed)

## *NGOS*

- 1.) Dr. Marwan Khoury, Founder of the aid agency Barada – Syrienhilfe e.V. Hof (confirmed)
- 2.) Dr. Uwe Gräbe, EVS Evangelischer Verein; Schneller Schulen, Stuttgart (confirmed)
- 3.) Rubert Neudeck, Grünhelme e.V., Troisdor (confirmed)
- 4.) Matthias Vogt, Missio, Aachen (confirmed)
- 5.) Martin Glasenapp, Medico international, Frankfurt (confirmed)
- 6.) Mirjam Roller, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Berlin (confirmed)
- 7.) Dr. Konrad von Bonin, Former Head of Bread for the world, Berlin (confirmed)

## *Representativ KAS:*

- 1.) Dr. Otmar Oehring, officemanager, KAS, Amman (confirmed)
- 2.) Dr. Thomas Volk, Advisor, Konrad Adenauerstiftung, Berlin (confirmed)

## *Representatives of political administrations:*

### *Among others (see program – Berlin 6.11.2014):*

- 1.) Department chief Dr. Bernhard Felmberg, BMZ, Berlin (confirmed)
- 2.) Lutz Töpfer, German Federal Parliament, Berlin (confirmed; Berlin 6.-7.11.)

## *Journalists:*

- 1.) Jörg Armbruster (SWR, Stuttgart), Stuttgart (confirmed)

2.) George Khoury (Deutsche Welle), Bergheim (confirmed)

3.) Daniel Gerlach (orientalistische Zeitschrift „Zenith“), Berlin (confirmed)

4.) Martin Durm, SWR Stuttgart, Stuttgart (confirmed)

*Organisation:*

1.) Noomi Peter, political sciences, Marburg (confirmed)

2.) Dr. Stephan Schaede, Director, Protestant Academy Loccum (confirmed)

*Simultaneous translation – Arabic-German; German-Arabic:*

1.) Samir Grees, Berlin (confirmed)

2.) Youssef Hijazi, Berlin (confirmed)