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Georgia: The Leaders of all Areas of Society in three Days

Hahn and Schirmmacher meet the Prime Minister and Patriarch

(Bonn, 16.07.2016) Together with the head of Germany's Professorenforum, Hans-Joachim Hahn, the President of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)



Mit dem Ministerpräsidenten

and Moderator for Intrafaith and Interfaith Relations of the World Evangelical Alliance, Thomas Schirmmacher, has conducted a visit to state, academic, economic, religious, and human rights leaders in Georgia.

Is it possible to meet with leaders of all areas of society in a country over the course of three days? Indeed, it works in a smaller country with great hospitality such as that found in Georgia," Schirmmacher explained to the media. "And if there are friends with good connections, as is the case with the Professorenforum under the leadership of Hans-Joachim Hahn, his counterpart, the Metropolitan Daniel, and the chairman of the Georgian section of the ISHR, Avtandil Davitaia," he added.

The high point was a joint dinner with the Prime Minister of the country, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Ilja II., as well as his right hand, Metropolitan Daniel (Datuashvili), in the Church's main cathedral in Mzecheta. The

conversation centered on the relationship between church and state in Georgia in light of the desire Georgia has to become a member of the EU, which includes European standards of religious freedom.

- Included as additional dialog partners were:
- the President of the exiled Abkhaz government, Vakhtang Kolbaia, together with the president of the exiled parliament and individual ministers,



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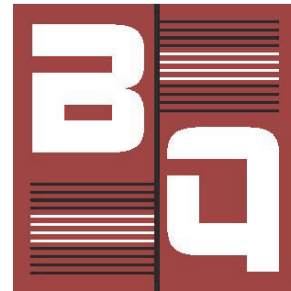
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- the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, David Bakradze,
- the President of the National Section of the ISHR in Georgia, Prof. Dr. Avtandil Davitaia, along with additional board members,
- the President of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences, Prof. Dr. Tamas Gamqrelidse,
- the Rector of Orthodox University, Prof. Dr. Sergo Vardosanidze, with the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Prof. Dr. Dimitri Nadirashvili,
- the President of the 62 largest Georgian businesses (Business Association of Georgia), George Chirakadze, with additional board members,
- the Georgian Orthodox Church delegate for ecumenism, Prof. Dr. Eka Kvachantiradze, Historian at Tbilisi State University,
- the entire board of the “International Centre for Christian Studies at the Georgian Orthodox Church,” among them Chairman Prof. Dr. Mushhelishvili and his two deputies, Archbishop Anania (Japaridze), Metropolitan of Manglisi and Tsalka, and Archimandrite Prof. Dr. Adam (Vakhtang Akhaladze), Professor of Medicine and Rector of the King Tamar University.
- Additionally, the Church and government organized a meeting with the 'intelligentsia,' meaning the country's 60 leading artists, scientists, and people from the business community at the International Cultural Center in Tbilisi. There, long discussions took place regarding two brief introductory talks by Hahn and Schirmmacher on the relationship between Christianity and modernity.
- Additionally, Hahn and Schirmmacher held guest lectures at the country's Orthodox University in Tiflis on the meaning and distinctive characteristics of Christian education.



(v. l.) Schirmmacher, Patriarch Ilja II., Hahn, Metropolitan Daniel

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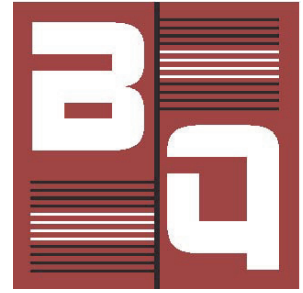
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Schirmmacher was accompanied by his personal assistant, Martin Warnecke, and his daughter, Esther Schirmmacher, an Islamic studies researcher (BA).

The Apostolic Orthodox Church of Georgia

The Apostolic Orthodox Church of Georgia is an autocephalous Orthodox Church. Its origins are traceable back to missions work by the Apostles in the 1st century. In the year 325 A.D., Bishop Stratophilos of Pityounta (present-day Pizunda), from western Georgia, participated in the First Council of Nicaea. King Mirian III made contact with Constantinople and invited Orthodox priests to come to the country. They began to conduct missions in Iberia in 326 A.D. In 327 A.D., Christianity was made the state religion of Iberia. The Church has been autocephalous since 487, and since the 11th century the head has been called the Catholicos Patriarch of all Georgia. Autocephaly



Schirmmacher und Hahn beim Symposium

was done away with in Russia in 1811 and reintroduced in 1917. Patriarch Illia II was born in 1933 and selected in 1977. Achievements to his credit include, among others, the publication of the Bible in modern Georgian.

The Patriarch personally participated in a demonstration against Soviet rule on April 9, 1989. He attempted in vain to have demonstrators withdraw to the nearby Kashueti Church. In the end, the Soviet military ended the peaceful demonstration, whereby 22 people died and hundreds were injured. During the civil wars of the 1990s, Illia II repeatedly called for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

In 1977, in protest against the ethically “liberal” positions of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Georgian Orthodox Church left the WCC, although Illia II had at times been the vice president of the WCC.

The Cathedral

The Swetizchoweli Cathedral, which was built from 1010 to 1029 and in which the reception by the Prime Minister and Patriarch took place, was, over the course of several centuries the coronation and burial church of the Georgian kings and the primary church of the Apostolic Orthodox Church of Georgia. Up to today, it is the seat of the Archbishop of Mzcheta and Tiflis, who is simultaneously the Catholicos

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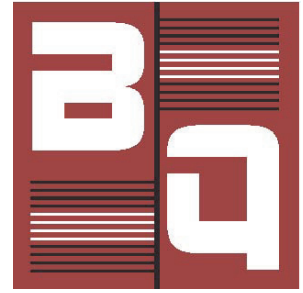
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Patriarch of Georgia. Georgia's first church already stood there in the 4th century, and a number of legends refer to this with respect to the Christianization of Georgia in 317 A.D.

Professorenforum

Since its founding at the end of the 1990s, Professorenforum, under the coordination of Hans-Joachim Hahn, has been bringing academics from various disciplines, countries, and denominations together to engage in discourse on Christian and occidental values and worldview topics with respect to their significance for scholarship and society. At the same time, events, publications, networks, and other efforts to raise public interest and awareness have been organized.

Professorenforum has also organized discussion meetings at German universities where Christian and non-religious academics enter into debate. Additionally, symposiums with similar initiatives are held, and since 2013 this has also taken place within the Georgian-German dialog.



Das Symposium

Downloads:

- [Photo 1](#): With the Prime Minister
- [Photo 2](#): (from the left) Schirmmacher, Patriarch Ilja II, Hahn, Metropolitan Daniel
- [Photo 3](#): Schirmmacher and Hahn at the symposium in their honor (1)
- [Photo 4](#): Schirmmacher and Hahn at the symposium in their honor (2)
- [Photo 5](#): The symposium in their honor
- [Photo 6](#): Schirmmacher and Hahn with Metropolitan Daniel, the right hand of the Patriarch
- [Photo 7](#): With the ISHR board after some time on topics related to human rights

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- [Photo 11](#): Reception by the exiled government of Abkhazia, at the front right the President, the President of Parliament, and the President of the Supreme Court
- [Photo 12](#): View of the heads of the Abkhaz government, at the end the President of the ISHR in Georgia, Avtandil Davitaia
- [Photo 13](#): Seat of the exiled government of Abkhazia
- [Photo 13B](#): Flag of Abkhazia
- [Photo 14](#): Guest lecture by Thomas Schirmmacher, seated next to him is Hans-Joachim Hahn
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- [Photo 17](#): With the board members of the Georgian Academy of Sciences
- [Photo 18](#): Aerial photo of Mzecheta with the Swetizchoweli Cathedral
- [Photo 19](#): Aerial photo of Mzecheta; Wikipedia, "The enclosed premises of the Swetizchoweli Cathedral, near the Kura River": RIGHTS: WIKIPEDIA

Links

- Patriarch Illia II.: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illia_II_of_Georgia
- Orthodox University: <http://en.sangu.edu.ge/index.php>
- Rector of the University: <http://en.sangu.edu.ge/index.php?page=684&lang=geo>
- Academy of Sciences: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgische_Nationale_Akademie_der_Wissenschaften
- President of the Academy: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamas_Gamqrelidze
- Exiled government of Abkhazia: http://abkhazia.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=30
- President of the exiled government of Abkhazia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vakhtang_Kolbaia

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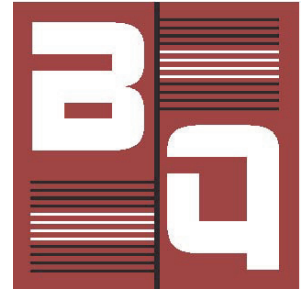
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- Business Association of Georgia: <http://bag.ge/en/33>; the President: <http://eugbc.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/6.-CV-George-Chirakadze.pdf>
- ICCS: <http://logos.org.ge/eng/gamgeoba.php>
- Human rights situation: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_in_Georgia
- Corruption: <http://www.transparency.ge/en/latest>

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