

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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BQ 530 – No. 13/2018

“It is scandalous, that presently in Germany asylum is denied to nearly all converts from Islam to the Christian faith”

(Bonn, 18.05.2018) The district court of Traunstein has imposed life sentence on the 30 years old Afghan refugee Hamidullah M., who had brutally murdered a mother of four from Afghanistan, because she had converted from Islam to Christianity. The crime against the woman, who, apart from this, was unknown to him, happened in front of a Lidl store with 16 knife stabs in sight of two sons (5 and 11 years old). The court and the prosecutor stated the particular severity of the guilt and did not follow the defence's line of argument, that the fact had to be taken into account as mitigating, that from earliest age he was confronted with violence, blood and death (see, for example, the SPIEGEL ONLINE article “Lifelong imprisonment for murder of a converted woman”, 09.02.2018, in German).

Whoever was thinking, that the claims of converts from Islam to Christianity of being threatened, whether it be by relatives and by fellow countrymen (as in the cases of Afghanistan or Pakistan), or by their home countries (as in the case of Iran) are overstated or ostensible, has now once more received evidence, that this is a matter of bitter reality.

Countless media inquiries show, that throughout Europe such converts are being persecuted, such as recently the radio broadcast by Daniel Guthmann and Marcus Latton “On the Run from Allah” (in German) from Feb 11th 2018 on NDR Info. There both, Christians, who formerly were Moslems, and atheists, who formerly were Moslems, report about being constantly threatened by their countrymen. Iran, Iraq, even Albania – the list of the countries concerned is long.

Unfortunately it's not possible to call a spade a spade, as to where bishops are prohibited by the police to welcome converts from Islam to Christianity in their



In discussion with the Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Churches in Germany and the Bishop for ecumenical Relations in front of the Berlin Cathedral © BQ/Warnecke

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churches, as that would be too dangerous. Often baptisms of converts resemble secret commando operations.

But that does not stop the federal agency involved (BAMF – Federal Office of Migration and Refugees) to refuse to grant a large number of converts from Islam to Christianity the right of asylum and to expel them quickly, and that while at the same time the deportation practices concerning perpetrators of violence are very sluggish and while asylum is granted to other countrymen for trivial reasons. A person lets himself be baptised at the risk of his life, everybody tries for security reasons not to make this public, the police warns against the risk, but the BAMF knows better: it was only for pretense.

It was a thousand times deplored and called for by the large churches that the BAMF should deploy neutral translators. But so far, when the BAMF examines whether a conversion is genuine or not, it often builds its decision on the insufficient translations of Muslim translators. This is absurd! The magazine pro recently called this practice “Humour which can cost lives” (in German), and the magazine instances the example, that an asylum seeker, according to the translator, was speaking of the soccer player Lothar Matthäus, when in fact he spoke of Martin Luther and the evangelist Matthew. This may sound funny, but it’s not at all funny, when asylum and therewith one’s life can depend on it. For the country they have to return to knows very well, what Luther and Matthew are all about.

In their statement on assaults on Christians in refugee camps, the chairman of the German Bishop’s Conference and the EKD Council President have, among other things, called for a better screening of interpreters, who often, to the detriment of Christians and converts to Christianity, translated wrongly. Partly funny, partly hair raising and dangerous mistranslations are circulating in the media. Not a sound was heard on the part of the BAMF, only silence and hasty appeasement. Now it transpired that the BAMF 2017 and 2018 gave the boot to two thousand and one hundred (I repeat: two thousand and one hundred!) translators. The damage, which has possibly been caused by translators, especially for Christian asylum seekers, can presently not be figured. Now the “funny” instances potentially turn into deadly seriousness. At the same time it makes no difference, whether the interpreters mistranslate the Christian’s statements from a lack of knowledge, or because their own religious socialization has made them hostile against Christian statements, or out of the intention to harm Christians. How do the decision-makers of the BAMF answer the highly complicated and extremely sensitive question, whether a conversion to Christianity is feigned or not, while relying on bad or biased interpreters? It would be difficult to determine, even if perfect German was spoken on both sides. But the BAMF feels confident that its decisions are always careful and correct.

Deplorable, besides the interpreters, is also the fact, that among the decision-makers there are in most cases completely “unmusical” people with regards to religion claiming the ability to assess the true faith of a person of another language, who, looked at from the outside, is baptised, well integrated in a church, who has a good report by his pastor and often lives his faith much more actively than most Christians in Germany, who nonetheless live under the protection of religious freedom.

In the course of this some older cases are also being re-opened, such as the recent one of a convert in Pforzheim, who had lived there for several years and who suddenly was to be deported to Pakistan, where the Islamic mob is very eager to kill apostates, whereby it is all the same to them, whether the person concerned has only gone to church for years to feign a conversion or whether he really means it – in each

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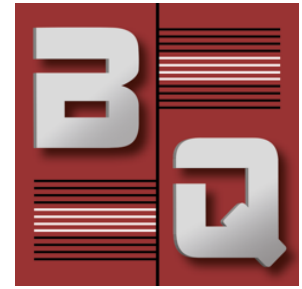
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case he can't be a Moslem any more, anyway. The pastor of his local church in Pforzheim, who had baptised him after extensive instruction, was so appalled, that he made the erroneous accusation, the church allowed herself to be deceived by a conversion-impostor, the topic of a Christmas sermon, but without changing anything thereby, of course.

This seems to be almost a global wave, though: Daily I receive horror stories from the U.S.A., the Scandinavian countries or from Austria of rejected asylum procedures of converts.

Of course, the BAMF may and must examine, whether the grounds of asylum are ostensible. But in the final analysis it is really irrelevant, whether an Iraqi or an Afghan has left Islam only in pretence or really. Once returned to Iran, he is classified as an apostate, who will either be arrested or, more often, will simply disappear.

Downloads and Links:

- **Photo:** In discussion with the Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Churches in Germany and the Bishop for ecumenical Relations in front of the Berlin Cathedral © BQ/Warnecke
- “Lifelong imprisonment for murder of a converted woman” (SPIEGEL ONLINE, 09.02.2018, in German): <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/traunstein-lebenslange-haft-fuer-mord-an-konvertierter-frau-a-1192612.html>
- “On the Run from Allah: Ex-Muslims in European society” (NDR, 11.02.2018, in German): https://www.ndr.de/info/sendungen/das_feature/Auf-der-Flucht-vor-Allah_sendung727408.html
- “Humour which can cost lives” (pro Medienmagazin, 12.01.2018, in German): <https://www.pro-medienmagazin.de/kommentar/2018/01/12/komik-die-das-leben-kosten-kann/>
- “Statement by Cardinal Reinhard Marx, President of the German Bishops’ Conference, and Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Bishop of the Protestant Church in Germany, on the situation of Christians and religious minorities in shelters for asylum seekers” (German Bishops Conference, 12.07.2016, in German): https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2016/2016-123a-Gemeinsame-Stellungnahme-Situation-Asylbewerberunterkuenfte.pdf; see also Thomas Schirmacher’s statement on this subject: <https://www.bucer.de/ressource/details/bonner-querschnitte-402016-ausgabe-435.html>
- “Converted Christian faces deportation to Pakistan” (PZ news, 27.12.2017, in German): https://www.pz-news.de/pforzheim_artikel.-Konvertiertem-Christ-droht-Abschiebung-nach-Pakistan-_arid.1204768.html

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