

Pontifical University: Schirmmacher calls all churches to unite in prayer, research and advocacy in face of exploding discrimination and persecution of Christians

The International Institute for Religious Freedom is honored by the US Ambassador for International Religious Freedom

As part of an international consultation on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Dignitatis Humanae, the declaration on religious freedom made by the Second Vatican Council, the Director of the [International Institute for Religious Freedom](#) (IIRF) of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) gave a guest lecture at the Pontifical University of Urbaniana. The consultation was hosted by the Center for Civil and Human Rights at the University of Notre Dame, the [Religious Freedom Project](#) of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University in Washington and the Community of Sant'Egidio in Rome. Schirmmacher was accompanied by two colleagues of the IIRF, the co-director of the IIRF, Prof. Dr. Christof Sauer, Cape Town, and Prof. Dr. Thomas K. Johnson, the WEA's religious freedom ambassador to the Vatican.



Schirmmacher, who is also a moderator for ecumenical and interreligious relations for the WEA, called on all churches to unite in prayer, research, and commitment for those affected in view of the explosive increase in discrimination and persecution of Christians. He referred to the successful international consultation of all denominations in Tirana in November 2015. It proved that such unity and cooperation was possible and meaningful.

The conference was attended by numerous patriarchs and bishops from oriental churches as well as leading religious freedom scholars and researchers of religious freedom violations, especially from the USA.

This included the research team of the "Religious Freedom Project" and the leaders of many NGO's in the field of the research and defense of religious freedom.



During a reception at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See, Johnson and Schirmmacher spoke with the U.S. Ambassador Ken F. Hackett, several other Ambassadors to the Holy See, and the U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, David N. Saperstein. On this occasion, Saperstein thanked the IIRF for upholding the issue of religious freedom within the academic world, particularly through the International Journal for Religious Freedom. He invited IIRF scholars to his office at the US State Department.



Ambassador Ken F. Hackett was nominated by President Barack Obama on June 14, 2013 and confirmed by the US Senate on August 1, 2013. Before that he was president of Catholic Relief Services from 1993 to 2012.

Ambassador David N. Saperstein is the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. He was confirmed by the Senate on December 12, 2014 and took his oath of office on January 6, 2015. According to the law, the Ambassador is the principal advisor to the President and Secretary of State of the United States in matters of religious freedom worldwide and serves as the principal diplomat in these matters. He also heads the Office of International Religious Freedom in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the State Department. Saperstein is a Jewish rabbi and lawyer. For 40 years he was director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), the largest Jewish program for social justice found in the United States.



“[Under Caesar’s Sword](#)” is a three-year global research program conducted by several universities on how Christian churches react when persecuted. The Templeton Religion Trust has provided \$1.1 million for this purpose, administered by the Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Religious Freedom Project at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University in Washington.

[More photos online ...](#)