

Christine Schirrmacher lectures at Melbourne University

Dialogue with Asian-faculty and the largest mosque in Australia

[Christine Schirrmacher](#) gave a guest lecture for the professors of the faculty of the Asian Institute of the University of Melbourne. [The National Centre for Contemporary Islamic Studies](#) (NCCIS), chaired by Professor [Abdullah Saeed](#), is part of the Asian Institute.

Schirrmacher's topic was the question of religious freedom in Muslim majority countries: Muslim majority countries typically seem to have a problem with granting religious freedom to their citizens, especially when it comes to minorities. Even though the Koran does not contain any clear statement about punishing apostates, the prevailing attitude among Muslim theologians till today is that apostasy has to be punished by the death penalty if the convert openly confesses his new faith. At the same time, the number of Muslim intellectuals is growing who opt for freedom rights (among them religious freedom). The lecture argued that the future of Islamic cultures will depend on listening to the voices of Islamic intellectuals being defenders of religious freedom within the context of Islam. A religion which is coercing its people to belief is going to die out in our globalized world.



Abdullah Saeed is currently the [Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies](#) at the University of Melbourne and director of its National Centre for Contemporary Islamic Studies. He is particularly known for his progressive views on religious freedom in Islam and his main work on the subject has been translated into several languages. He was born in the Maldives. He graduated from the Islamic University of Medina in 1986 with a Bachelor of Arts in Arabic and Islamic Studies. He holds an MA in Applied Linguistics as well as a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Melbourne, earned in 1992 and 1994, respectively. Major works are 'Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam' (2004) and 'Islam and Belief: At Home with Religious Freedom' (2014).

Christine and Thomas Schirrmacher also visited the [Lakemba Mosque](#) in Sydney and had a dialogue meeting with the leadership of the mosque there.

The Lakemba Mosque, also known as the Masjid Ali Bin Abi Talib and officially the Imam Ali bin Abi Talib Mosque, is Australia's largest mosque. It is run by an organisation of Lebanese immigrants and originally was a Shiite mosque, but meanwhile is open to all branches of Islam. The Imam of Lakemba Mosque is Shaykh Yahya Safi, originally an Imam in Lebanon before his appointment at the Lakemba Mosque in 1996.

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