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[Video link](#)

The future of Christians in the Middle East - We need to have honest debates

For 8 years now I have been actively dealing with the fate of the persecuted Christians in the Middle East, who, due to their negative experiences in dealing with human rights, sometimes politically legitimized, sometimes religiously motivated, are immensely sensitized to threatening developments. This can also be seen at the ballot box in Europe, when those who have been naturalised for many generations cast their votes. Out of fear and concern for terror, but also out of experience with Islamic societies, many feel attracted by right-wing and populist parties. Many in turn take advantage of this to inflame the concerns and fears of the population further on. It leads to fragmentation of the middle of society and forces it into a necessary discourse, which has to be conducted. From the headscarf debate to the national soccer team, religion overshadows the content of the discussions. Europe once assumed that religion as a differentiating factor was a thing of the past. But spiritualism, and this does not only mean Islam, is coming back with full force. Precisely because we are now acting globally and many people in the world are religious. With the influx of refugees from the Middle East and Africa this effect intensifies even more. And unfortunately it can also be observed that many in the debates, including respected politicians, take the wrong tone when it comes to dealing with religion and its effects. We should learn from the mistakes of recent decades. In Iraq and other countries in the Middle East, more and more critical voices are being heard about the negative effects and politicisation of religion. The rise of the Islamic State with its inhuman ideology has led to many debates that must be continued. However, on a less populist level, than more, committed to tradition, within philosophical accents. As cruel as it may sound, the terror organization has caused young Muslims in particular to start questioning rigid and outdated views in their own religion. The fact that the status as second-class people under Sharia law has led to indigenous minorities like Christians entering the exodus is only one of many developments that gives a young generation in the Middle East food for thought.

In my last documentary, I conducted the interviews in Iraq and Syria in March 2018, politicians, clergymen, but also young Muslims who seem to deal very profoundly with the developments in their society have their say. The call for separation between state and religion, uniform laws for all citizens and their strict observance, more freedom of opinion and press, and the open addressing of corruption seem to bother young Iraqi citizens. I was sometimes surprised by the frankness of the talks, which always were on a respectful level.

After all these years, I have hope and faith. Hope because I see a young generation gathering in a grassroots movement and wanting to make a difference. They are simply tired of being bullied by ultra-orthodox clerics or corrupt politicians. Faith, because I am convinced, and the young companions in the documentary, Hassan and Ali, are only one example, and because I really see that a young generation walks the talk. By the way, not only in the Middle East, but also in Germany, for example. Here, the activities of the 12thMemoRise group, to which Ali and Hassan belong, should be mentioned which are sometimes mediaally celebrated and provoked in a striking and sometimes pompous way. But perhaps it is precisely this provocation that we need, in addition to the sometimes always same panel discussions and clear consensus, often without interruption.

Yes, the often religiously legitimized persecution or oppression of religious and indigenous minorities is taking place in politically unstable regions, autocracies, dictatorships, etc. And yes, populism in Europe and in the western world in general, which creates in many respects a stage for itself and often causes misogyny, Islamophobia, hatred of dissenters, etc., even celebrated in intellectual circles and fired hot-blooded into the social media, has now returned to society.

From the point of view of globalisation, technological development, above all the digitalisation of society, demographic development and a combination of all these factors, however, all this was foreseeable. Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations", an opus published in 1996, already described today's scenario. We just refused to believe.

What to do now? Burying the head in the sand? By no means!

Let's learn from the recent past and use the concentrated knowledge of a young generation that has acquired reason, and let's tackle the debates that need to be conducted.

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Perhaps this documentation contributes a little bit.

Simon Jacob 28 February 2018,
Baghdad /Central Iraq

Buchtipp:

Seit Jahren reist Simon Jacob durch Länder wie Syrien, Irak oder Iran. Als Angehöriger eines wichtigen Clans gelangt er an Orte, die für andere nie zugänglich waren. Dort spricht er mit Menschen, immer auf der Suche: der Suche nach Frieden, auch seinem eigenen Inneren. Seine Reise schildert auch die Schrecken dieser Kriegsgebiete. Aber mehr noch zeigt dieses Buch, dass und wie Friede wirklich möglich ist. Eine Botschaft, die vor allem in diesen Tagen Mut und Hoffnung macht und motiviert, zu kämpfen für eine bessere Zukunft und für etwas, was Simon Jacob ausgerechnet im Irak und in Syrien wiedergefunden hat: Menschlichkeit.



Bestellbar über

