

Editorial

Dear Readers,

The announcement by U.S. President Donald Trump that Jerusalem will be recognised as the capital of Israel and the subsequent reactions from various political and religious groups have once again shown: both spheres – politics and religion – have always been closely interwoven, not only in Christianity, but also in Islam, Judaism, and other religions. Even in the 21st century, it is hard to imagine politics without any religious dimension, and religion without politics, in many parts of the world.

Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, can look back on an eventful history of political interference with their faith. Nevertheless, they have succeeded in preserving their religious identity under various political systems in the face of what were sometimes dire circumstances, as Dževada Šuško's article reports.

In Senegal, a predominantly Muslim country, the separation of state and religion is a constitutional principle. At the same time, however, local religious leaders, the Marabouts, are demonstrating increasing political will. Thomas Volk's article analyses the role of the Sufi Brotherhoods and what that role has to do with the growing influence of Islamist groups.

Some of the evangelical churches in Latin America, whose ranks have swelled by around 15 per cent in recent decades, are also taking a stronger political position. The highly fragmented movements have not yet developed a common, transnational political agenda. Yet, in light of demographic developments, the evangelical voter potential – and thus its voice in politics – is likely to increase further in the future, as José Luis Pérez Guadalupe and Sebastian Grundberger explain in their article.

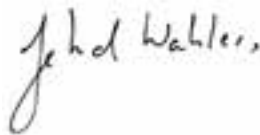
A glance at Asia shows the considerable influence of religion in legal, social, and political matters. In her article, Dian A. H. Shah examines the question of how religion, legislation, and political calculation interact in their entirety and the extent to which politics is influenced by populist religious elements in particular.

Finally, Otmar Oehring uses the example of the persecution of Christians in Iraq by the so-called Islamic State (IS) to illustrate the inhumane consequences that political interpretation of fundamentalist religious ideologies can still have today. IS atrocities have contributed decisively to the exodus of Iraqi Christians. Although Christian settlements in the Nineveh plain have been freed from IS, the risk of a complete end to Christian presence in Iraq remains.

Especially in the context of armed conflicts and violent repression, the significance of religious freedom cannot be estimated highly enough. On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Chancellor Angela Merkel once again pointed out that the preservation of religious liberty throughout the world is a central task for which political and religious authorities share responsibility. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung will continue its international commitment to religious freedom as a fundamental human right as well as religious dialogue in the future.

I wish you a stimulating read.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'G'.

Dr. Gerhard Wahlers is Editor of International Reports, Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Department European and International Cooperation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (gerhard.wahlers@kas.de).