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Freedom of Religion

OSCE / ODIHR

BismiLLAH-ir-RAHMAN-ir-RAHÎM

Thank you very much for this friendly invitation.
The Central Council of Muslims in Germany is very happy to be part of this important meeting between Muslimic and Jewish leaders in Europe.

Why ?

Why is this meeting important ?

Your agenda is full of work -
my agenda is full of work -
so what is the reason for travelling hundreds of miles only to meet the leaders of another religion ?

The reason is very easy:

On the one hand

there are still a lot of differences between the Jewish and Muslimic people.
There are still a lot of political problems between people with Jewish or Muslimic religion.

But on the other hand

we have the same problems:

The problems of Jewish and Muslimic people have become bigger:
The culture and the public media have become more and more atheistic. There is a strong trend towards direct or indirect atheism
There is a strong trend towards a society with less and less moralic rules.

The results are

- * loneliness,
- * mental emptiness and

- * drug problems

The criminalization of **circumcision was a very serious example for our common current problems**

Let`s make a retrospective

August 2010

A professor of law, a state prosecutor and a judge ignite the so-called “circumcision debate”.

For months, members of parliament, lawyers, doctors and self-appointed experts discussed the issue of whether the centuries-old religious practice of circumcising Jewish and Muslim boys should be forbidden in Germany.

The Jews, Muslims and other objective people living in Germany became so appalled about this artificial problem that it occupied them for many months.

Every cloud has a silver lining –

true to this English adage, the circumcision debate also had a good side.

For:

The cooperation between Jewish and Muslim figures, between the Central Council of Jews and the Central Council of Muslims, has intensified considerably since then.

And:

Some years later, new forms of cooperation emerged, which are unique in such an institutionalised form in Germany and Europe.

Germany is the only country in the world to have made a “problem” out of the centuries-old religious duty of circumcision. For this reason, the newly-created § 1631 d BGB (German Civil Code) should one again permit circumcision officially. The draft law was discussed for months on political committees.

Has this solved all of the problems? Unfortunately not. For: It is to be expected that the tedious and absurd discussion concerning circumcision was only the first attempt to package anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and a hostility towards religion in a “scientific cloak”.

We are accustomed to primitive attacks on Jews, Muslims, migrants and foreigners. The prejudices and accusations are usually so primitive, that every citizen of average education can quickly recognise how these can and should be categorised.

However it becomes more difficult when doctors or other academics participate in such discussions, in the process referring to their “natural professional authority”.

For the “demigods in white” continue to enjoy a high level of authority among the broad population. Yet in some cases such hair-raising prejudices are discussed at the level of the gutter that one would never have expected in such circles. For example, Professor Dr. med Wolfram Hartmann, president of the professional association of paediatric doctors, claimed in all seriousness that the rate of complications during circumcisions was “6 to 7 %”, while his colleague, Professor Dr. med. Maximilian Stehr, senior consultant at the paediatric clinic in of the Klinikum Innenstadt in Munich stated publicly that the removal of part of the foreskin was comparable with female genital circumcision.

Jews and Muslims are also human beings! IF the rate of complications during circumcisions were actually 6 to 7 %, hardly any Jew or Muslim would allow his son to be circumcised. For of course this figure has either been invented or is simply scientifically wrong. Rather, the actual rate of complication is 0.10 to 0.20 percent.

Cooperation brings strength

The circumcision debate arrived quickly, surprisingly and intensively. Only thanks to the professional cooperation between Jewish and Muslim figures was it possible to motivate politicians and legislators to avoid errors and premature conclusions.

Example:

The American Jewish Committee in Berlin made the effort of intensively disproving all “scientific” prejudices. The brochure “Facts and Myths in the Circumcision Discussion” describes understandably and comprehensively why these prejudices are wrong.

The Central Council of Muslims was able to deploy this brochure during several hearing in the Bundestag, and thus confront the professorial opponents of circumcision with well-founded facts.

This time, we could solve the problem of circumcision. But what’s about the next attack against the Jewish or Islamic religion. What’s about the next attack against Jewish AND Muslimic people.

So these are very important reasons to work together !

In many European countries radical right-wing parties have achieved two-digit results. In Germany we don`t have strong right-wing parties. But of course we have an open and a hidden Anti-Semitism. Of course we have an open and a hidden Anti-Islamism.

There are a lot of Germans with anti-Semitic settings.
There are a lot of migrants with anti-Semitic settings.
There are a lot of Germans with anti-Muslim settings.
An of course - there are a lot of Jewish people with anti-Muslim settings.

But there are although a lot of humans without or with less prejudices. There are although a lot of humans who are not stupid.

Most of the Muslims in Germany are friendly and easy people. Most of the Jewish in Germany are friendly and easy people.

What`s about the Muslim - Jewish relationship in Germany today.

The Islamic mosque communities are pragmatically.
They have personal relationships to Jewish people in their neighbourhood and to Rabbiners.

The Central Council of Muslims in Germany and the Central Council of Jewish in Germany have a good relationship. We stand in contact constantly.

I am very happy, that we have a new generation of young and intelligent Leaders and players, who are not interested in old fashioned political or socially prejudices. These are very positive developments.

But please remember:

Bad people on both sides give new food for old prejudices over and over again.

Unfortunately the Jewish and Muslimic people in Germany can not influence murders, wars and meanness all over the world.

But we can try to make a difference between our neighbours and black sheeps. We can try to make a difference between our neighbours and bad people playing a wrong play.

We have a lot of areas where a lot of important jobs have to be done !

It is not enough to defend ourselves.

We must show the positive elements of our religions.

This is the chance to win the unknown young people for us.

The cooperation between the Central Council of Muslims and the Central Council of Jewish in Germany is good - but this is not enough !

Perhaps it is difficult to develop the official cooperation.

The big players have to notice a lot of complicated political and diplomatic rules.

Therefore, the possibilities of an official cooperation are limited.

So we should find new ways for strategic **cooperation** units.

We should create some special task forces with special aims.

I will give you an example for a special task force between Jewish and Muslim humans in Germany:

JUMU Deutschland gGmbH

Jewish community.

Muslim umbrella organization.

An association promoting the integration of migrants.

an association for the professional integration of refugees.

The chairman of a Jewish community and the chairman of a Muslimic association are the managing directors of this organization.

JUMU offers action days that should give a vividly and brightly view in the Jewish and the Islamic religion.

These action days should show the Jewish and Islamic culture.

And - very important - these action days should use the reputation of famous Jewish and Islamic humans.

There will be a big acceptance - because the cooperation of both affected religions is new and unusual.

With a modern and attractive design these action days will increase the numbers of friendly and open minded humans without prejudices.

Please remember:

My personal relationship to the Jewish community doesn't base on school knowledge or public education.

My personal relationship to the Jewish community based on pleasantly hours with friendly Jewish Rabbins.

Hamza Wördemann