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Appeal for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Karabakh

As scholars who feel particularly connected to the churches and the culture of Armenia, we are concerned not only with the course of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, but also with the question of the future of the people living there and the cultural heritage. The threat to Armenian culture cannot be indifferent to us, not only because cultural minorities are to be protected in principle, but also because the cultural heritage of Armenia is part of our common Christian heritage. We reject the ideological reinterpretation or destruction of historical cultural heritage, especially if this serves a political instrumentalization. As Christians, we feel obliged to show solidarity with fellow believers whose cultural identity is threatened.

The current situation shows how difficult it will be to preserve the witnesses of the Armenian presence in the region, to preserve their heritage and to allow foreign scholars access to the most important places. It seems to us to be urgently necessary to show ways that secure the legacy of the Armenian presence in order to counteract ideological constrictions. As a prerequisite for improving the situation, we currently see the urgent need to take all possible steps towards reconciliation between the warring peoples.

Therefore we call on:

- to protect Christian monuments from rededication and destruction and from de-Armenization
- for the admission of international scientists to safeguard the cultural heritage of the region
- to secure access to Christian sites for pilgrims
- to end war rhetoric

and propose

- to initiate confidence-building measure
- to encourage other institutions to comment
- to promote the organization of workshops and international specialist conferences on

monasteries / theology / spirituality/ conflict and peace research
(with internationally oriented publications)

This call was written and signed by the participants in an (online) expert conference that took place on March 4, 2021:

The Organizers:

Prof. Dr. Martin Tamcke, Göttingen
Prof. Dr. Andreas Müller, Kiel
Rev. Dr. Dagmar Heller, Bensheim

Participants:

Dr. Mekhak Ayvazyan, Erlangen
Prof. Dr. Armenuhi Drost-Abgaryan, Halle
Prof. Dr. Hacik Rafi Gazer, Erlangen
Prof. em. Dr. Martin George, Berlin
Prof. Dr. Theresia Hainthaler, Frankfurt
Dr. Harutyun Harutyunyan, Yerevan
Dr. Tessa Hofmann, Berlin
Dr. Armen Kazaryan, Moskau
Prof. em. Dr. Klaus Koschorke, München
Rev. Hanna Lehming, Hamburg
Dr. Johannes Oeldemann, Paderborn
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Further undersigned:

Prof. Dr. Thomas Bremer, Münster
Dr. Anna Briskina-Müller, Halle
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Rev. Christian Kurzke, Rüdersdorf/Magdeburg
Markus Meckel, Berlin
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Prof. Dr. Martin Wallraff, München
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