

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG

FÜR DIE FREIHEIT

Freiheit .org

Annual Report 2016

08 Highlights



- 10 European Future Conference
- 14 Freedom Prize
- 16 Raif Badawi Award
- 18 Boris Nemtsov Forum
- 20 Berlin Freedom Address

22 Open and digital society



- 24 Using games to teach human rights in Thailand
- 26 Sharia strives for emancipation
- 28 Training of trainers on e-commerce
- 30 Sharing is caring – isn't it?

32 Education



- 34 "Animate Europe" goes Strasbourg
- 36 From troublemakers to liberal revolutionaries?

38 Social market economy



- 40 Special award for contributions to economic freedom presented to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Bulgaria
- 42 Of kings and peanut butter producers

46 International politics



- 48 Latin America: Adiós populists
- 50 Trump triumphs
- 52 Free Media – Free Minds
- 54 Timothy Garton Ash on Brexit
- 56 Gerhardt and Paqué: Game over

58 Taking stock: a liberal perspective

- 60 The board's activities
- 61 Report by the board of trustees on committee work
- 62 On the self-conception of the political foundations
- 63 Engaged in political dialogue in over 60 countries worldwide
- 64 Acknowledgement and imprint

"When the Islamic world obscured itself, it took two actions: it closed the bars and veiled the women." This quote from Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi is one of many that provoke widespread indignation in the Islamic world. Still, award-winning Tunisian journalist Fawzia Zouari took it a step further: "Each time the Arabs are humiliated they lock up their women, each time it gets better we de-veil." For Zouari, Arab feminism has been trapped by religious morals since the 14th century ("in a nutshell it's all about the permanent control of female sexuality"), as well as, more recently, by colonialism. As a way out she suggests that legislation should be introduced even before attitudes change, and mentions the example of the former Tunisian president, Habib Bourguiba, who in 1957 enacted a family law, prescribing monogamy and forbidding child marriages. Provocative statements like those quoted above trigger intense responses in the Islamic world, even leading to violence and death threats in some countries.

Not so in Morocco. Many similar assertions were made during the colloquium "Women and Religion" in Rabat in November 2016. Not only was it a public event, but also one that attracted considerable publicity: although the venue, the auditorium of the National Library has 300 seats, the demand was such that some spectators had to sit on the stairs. Over 30 of the most influential news agencies, TV and radio stations, and print and internet magazines reported on the event.

DAMIR, a secular think-tank and partner of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, drives the debate and works to expand liberal spaces. Equal rights for women are needed not only in Morocco but even more in other parts of the Islamic world. Accordingly, the conference invited intellectuals and activists from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Tunisia and Yemen. Each of the countries has a different Islamic make-up, and each participant contributed a different approach.

For example, Ahmed Assid, a university professor and activist for the rights of the Berber people, based his argumentation on the pre-Islamic customary law of the Berber, which in his view was more advanced and reasonable than Islamic law. Until Morocco's independence, customary law coexisted with Islamic law, but afterwards the latter prevailed. It was time to change again, said Assid: time to update "archaic sharia" for modern times. "For the great ulema (experts on Islamic law) in the Middle Ages, those may have been good solutions; today we have to liberate." Also, religious education needed to be adjusted to societal realities, such as the fact that more women than men were obtaining bachelor degrees today. "We are still living with interpretations by male ulema. We need interpretations made and studied by women."

Changes are possible but complicated: "We should avoid falling into the trap of simplification", demanded Tareq Oubrou, imam of Bordeaux. "The Quran is an anarchic text. It is not organised – neither by chronology nor by topic. There are intricate networks of themes to be untangled before being reconstituted a priori to make it possible to reinterpret the text." Nothing for the simple-minded ISIS followers who have called for Oubrou's death. Not intimidated by those who take selected verses literally, Oubrou, an outspoken opponent of the veil, claims: "The truth of the Quran is somewhere else. It is like pointing fingers: the finger shows in which direction to look." And the direction is clear to him: "Sharia strives for emancipation."

Sharia strives for emancipation

The need for equal rights in the Islamic world



Ahmed Assid, University professor, Amazigh activist and member of our partner organisation Damir

Poster of the conference Femmes et religion



"We are still living with interpretations by male ulema. We need interpretations made and studied by women."

