

Dear scholars, dear alumni,
dear partners and friends of KAAD,

Christmas should be glamorous, illuminated by candles and lights, unburdened by the troubles of everyday life, and harmonious. Most people seek solace in holidays from which they hope for a lot. However, they hardly or not at all experience them as religious holidays. They add Christian content as a garnish. This is a pity because Christmas helps us to interpret the world. It can provide comfort through faith.

This year, however, the light of Christmas seems to be less important than the darkness of Christmas as there is so much darkness in the world. The darkness of Christmas: the Gospels tell of the enormous burdens on Mary, Joseph and Jesus. The heavily pregnant woman is unmarried, the parents have no home and have to make do with a dirty stable. The birth takes place unassisted, the first visitors are shepherds, ordinary and by no means particularly reputable people. The family soon has to flee from Herod, the murderer of children. At least that's how the Christmas story tells it - statements that are not necessarily historical, but certainly faith-based.



Faith-based: Even if in the Christian faith God is a God of inaccessible light – a God who overcomes death and lovingly grants human beings' participation in the divine - the dark is also one of his places. God in the world: the Christmas faith also includes God being hidden in the darkness; in a kind of darkness of which the tale of Christmas knows so many. Part of the Christmas interpretation of the world is that God is also in the darkness.

It may be that powerlessness instead of omnipotence, negativity instead of positivity, is perceived as disturbing. Because we only think of light, strength and power when we talk about God. But perhaps it is precisely the weakness that can provide comfort - if and because it is a place of this God. Deus sub contrario: the seriously ill, the disabled, the neglected of all kinds, the abandoned, the disoriented, the compulsively fixated, refugees and migrants, Ukrainians, Israelis, Palestinians, inhabitants of Lebanon, and so many victims of war worldwide and others affected by various disasters live very real and depressing lives in the dark, but - from the perspective of Christmas - not without God. Jesus, the Christ Child and the victor over life and death took his last breath in the darkness of Good Friday, trembling and full of weakness. His kingdom of light, he said, was not of this world.

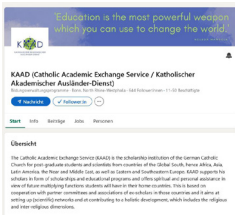
Perhaps it is good to remember these connections, especially in this year full of diverse conflicts, catastrophes and negative news. The light in the mode of darkness. We should never speak of it lightly, so as not to make anyone believe we are mocking them and not taking them seriously. This side of Christmas, nonetheless, can be comforting.

Yours

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Hans Langendörfer SJ".

Fr Dr Hans Langendörfer SJ
President of KAAD

NEWS



KAAD has also been active on LinkedIn since July. Here we offer you the opportunity to find out more about us, our worldwide educational events and our change agents. Visit our LinkedIn profile, follow us and become part of our growing community.

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[KAAD auf LinkedIn](#)

EDUCATIONAL AND NETWORKING EVENTS

'Public Health and Ethical Issues in the Middle East' - KAAD International Academy in Cairo



This year's KAAD's International Academy, which we organised in Cairo in October in cooperation with the DAAD, focused on public health issues and their ethical foundations from an interreligious perspective. Public health is a central topic of development work in the Middle East with great local and regional significance. *Bishop Dr Anton Losinger*, Episcopal Representative for the KAAD, spoke about Christian involvement in the public health sector and pointed out that Christians are represented in many institutions in the health sector with their expertise and ethical convictions. In his presentation, *Professor Walter Bruchhausen* (Institute for Hygiene and Public Health, University Hospital Bonn) discussed the German health insurance system and specific problems arising from it. *Dr Fekri Dureab* (WHO Regional Office

for the Eastern Mediterranean, Department of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, Cairo) highlighted the fact that challenges such as political instability, conflicts and excessive population growth lead to chronic and mental illnesses. He also addressed the consequences of the differences between rich and poor countries in the region regarding healthcare. *Dr Yasmin Shafei* (Center for Economic, Legal and Social Studies and Documentation, Cairo) discussed Muslim perspectives on public health in Egypt before the participants delved deeper into the topics of the presentations in working groups.

More about our International Academy

Before the Academy, a meeting was held with *Pope Tawadros II*, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church worldwide, who emphasised the importance of KAAD funding for ecumenical, interreligious and academic exchange. The KAAD delegation, consisting of our *President, Fr Dr Hans Langendörfer SJ*, *Bishop Dr Anton Losinger*, *KAAD Secretary General Dr Nora Kalbarczyk*, *Professor Walter Bruchhausen*, *Nils Fischer* (Head of the Near and Middle East Department) and *Helen Meier* (KAAD Public Relations), also had the opportunity to meet with the *Coptic Catholic Auxiliary Bishop Nassif Wasef Bakhom Kiroulos*, with *Professor Emmanuel Pisani OP*, Director of the Institut dominicain d'études orientales, with the *Advisor to the Grand Imam for Education and Culture, Professor Abdedayem Nossair*, as well as with lecturers from Azhar University. At the meeting with our alumnae and alumni as well as with our Egyptian Partner Committee, its long-standing president, *Abuna Kamil William Sam'an*, who has been a member of the committee since its foundation in 2002, received the Bene Merenti Medal of the KAAD for his extraordinary commitment to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.



[Click here for the detailed report.](#)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Global Health



Comemoração de 10 anos do Neurorehab
2º CONGRESSO INTERNACIONAL
sobre Diversidade, Equidade e Inclusão na
Saúde Global para Populações Vulneráveis

Just a few years ago, the field of 'rehabilitation and inclusion' received little attention in Latin America. Hence, our alumna *Dr Fabiana Faleiros* founded the international research group 'Neurorehab' at the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, in 2014. In collaboration with German and Latin American colleagues, including numerous KAAD alumnae and alumni, she has also developed a multilingual information portal on the internet for rehabilitation professionals as well as for people with disabilities and their relatives.

To mark the tenth anniversary of the research group, a conference on 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Global Health for Vulnerable Populations' was held at USP in August. Among the experts who gave presentations were members of the KAAD Academic Council, such as *Professor Christoph Käßler* from the Technical University of Dortmund and *Professor Walter Bruchhausen* from the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn.

[Click here for the detailed report](#)

Synodal Processes in Latin America and Germany in Comparison

In the run-up to the 53rd Eucharistic World Congress, an international KAAD alumni seminar was held at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Ecuador (PUCE), to which the local alumni association Asociación Ecuatoriana de ex-Becarios Católicos en Alemania had invited alumni from Peru and Colombia as well as former scholars from Ecuador. The keynote speech by *Dr Frank Ronge*, Head of the Faith and Education Department of the German Bishops' Conference and former Head of the Synodal Office, outlined the central elements of the Synodal Path in Germany and led into a discussion that ranged from well-known points of criticism to recognition of the structure of the synodal assemblies. The event was open not only to KAAD alumni, students and teachers of the PUCE but also to interested participants of the Eucharistic World Congress.



[More about the seminar](#)

Seminar on the Peace Process in the Philippines



Back in 2018, our International Academy in Tagaytay focussed on ideas for the peace process in the Philippines. At the end of October, the seminar 'Building Nations, Sustaining Peace', which we realised in cooperation with Miriam College in Quezon City and our alumni association Association of KAAD-Alumni in the Philippines, continued the theme of the previous event. The speakers *Professor Raul C. Navarro* (University of the Philippines), *Dr Clarito Cairo* (Department of Health, Philippine Government) and *Dr Oscar Bualong Jr.* (Graduate School of Business, Ateneo de Manila University) explored the question of whether complex

problems in the field of peace and nation-building processes are too often thought of within disciplinary boundaries. The Catholic Church has also initiated various peace initiatives in Mindanao, the work of which was emphasised by *Archbishop Emeritus Antonio Ledesma SJ*. The seminar clearly emphasised the importance of exchange at eye level, the recognition of mutual wounds and a serious (also legal) reappraisal as solutions.

[More about the academy](#)

KAAD Alumni discuss Current Challenges for Universities in Eastern and Southeastern Europe

Universities in Eastern and Southeastern Europe are facing numerous challenges, particularly in the institutional field. In addition to the goal of becoming more independent of state and political influence in teaching and research, they are also fighting for better financial support. To discuss these challenges, 33 KAAD alumnae and alumni from Georgia, Armenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania and the Republic of Moldova met at the Catholic Sulchan-Saba Orbeliani University in Tbilisi/Georgia in the run-up to the elections in Georgia. The conference also enabled KAAD alumni to develop their networking activities, which have borne their first fruits in the form of several cooperation agreements between German studies departments at universities in Armenia and Hungary.



Opportunities and Difficulties of the Circular Economy in Africa



In July, our scholars addressed the question of what sustainable economic activity can look like in a world of limited resources and a growing population as part of the KAAD's Africa-specific seminar, which took place in cooperation with the St. Ulrich Monastery educational centre in Bollschweil. In addition to the serious consequences of the use of certain materials on the climate and nature, presented by *Stefan Pauliuk* (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg), the transport sector and the vehicle production associated with it also came under scrutiny. *KAAD alumnus Dr Vincent Kyere* (Mountain Research Institute, Accra, Ghana) addressed the global flows of electronic waste and the immense damage these cause to soil, air and human health. The participants' presentations dealt with the prevention of food waste in African countries, sustainable agricultural systems on Kilimanjaro and the utilisation of the continent's abundant solar energy for local energy

generation and food production. During excursions to the Kahlenberg waste treatment association in the Ortenau district and to an organic farm, the scholars could explore the practical implementation of the circular economy.

[More about the seminar](#)

PERSONNEL

New Liaison Lecturer in Kiel



Professor Ruth A. Schmitz-Streit took up the post of liaison lecturer in Kiel in November. After studying biology in Marburg in 1989, *Ruth Schmitz-Streit* obtained her doctorate in microbiology at the Philipps University of Marburg in 1992, where she had the position of a postdoc until the end of 1993. From 1994 to 1996, she was as a postdoc at the University of California, Berkeley. She then worked at the Georg August University of Göttingen at the Institute of Microbiology and Genetics until 2004, where she habilitated in microbiology in 2001. Since 2004, she has been a Professor at the Institute of Molecular Microbiology at Kiel University. For fifteen years, she has supported the training of biotechnology students in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) through workshops at the Bio and Emerging Technology Institute - BETIn.

University Pastoral Care

KAAD Secretary General Dr Nora Kalbarczyk elected to the Main Committee for a further two years

The Bundesverband Katholische Kirche an Hochschulen e.V. (Federal Association of the Catholic Church at Universities) brings together over one hundred Catholic university and student parishes and university centres, the responsible university officers in the diocesan administrations and nine federal organisations from the fields of student support and adult education. The KAAD is also a member and has been represented in the main committee of the federal association for two years through *KAAD Secretary General Dr Nora Kalbarczyk*. She was elected to the main committee for a further two years at the general meeting of the federal association in Hanover in November.

Change at the Head Office



In September, *Lukas Heinen*, who had supported the Latin America and Middle East departments as a team assistant since 2023, made a career change. He was succeeded in the Latin America department by *Johannes Bausenhardt*, who already has experience in working with international students as he is part of the team at the scholarship organisation Lateinamerika-Deutschland e.V. (ICALA). The Middle East Department is now supported by *Anna Güldenring*, who has been working as a student assistant at KAAD since October.



OUTLOOK FOR THE YEAR 2025

KAAD-Annual Convention 2025 'Democracies under pressure'



At a time when many democracies are under increasing pressure, it is crucial to analyse the causes and effects of these developments. *Pope Francis* compares the crisis of democracy to a 'wounded heart' and encourages Catholics around the globe to work for justice and peace, to make their voices heard in the public sphere and to enable participation. Under the working title 'Democracies under pressure – causes and strategies for action from a global perspective', the 38th Annual Academy of the KAAD (22nd to 25th May), together with representatives from academia, politics and the Church, therefore, aims to examine the

factors contributing to the decline of democratic values in different regions of the world and the possible explanations for this. The aim is to discuss how democracies can be strengthened and made more resilient to internal and external threats and, above all, what role international organisations and civil society actors play in defending and promoting democratic principles.

KAAD International Academy 2025 in Indonesia

Every year, KAAD organises an academy in one of its regions of focus. Current and former scholars, partners from the region and guests from other regions and countries will attend. The International Academy abroad will take place in Semarang, Java, Indonesia, in 2025 and will focus on food security issues.

Hermann Weber-Scholarship 2024/25

This year's Hermann Weber Scholarship goes to *Sharon Yeukai Mada* from Zimbabwe. Since 2022, *Sharon* has been doing her doctorate at the Thünen Institute via the Georg-August University of Göttingen on 'Food waste in households and street markets in Zimbabwe'. Food waste is a highly relevant factor for food security and has already been identified in agricultural research as an important means of improving global food security and thus reducing poverty and hunger. At the retail and household level, however, research data has mainly been available from the Global North. *Sharon*, who comes from Hatcliffe in Harare and deals with issues of poverty reduction, wants to use her scientific work to show that the problem of food waste is also virulent in urban areas of Africa, thereby closing a gap in research.

For her outstanding academic commitment to her home country, *Sharon Yeukai Mada* has been awarded this year's Hermann Weber Scholarship.

[Video about Sharon on LinkedIn](#)



Laureate of the KAAD-Foundation Peter Hünemann 2025



Prof Guillermo Kerz and *Dr Ana Maria Bonet* will receive the 14th KAAD-Foundation Peter Hünemann Prize in 2025 for their scientific, ecclesiastical and social commitment in the fields of global health and integral ecology in Argentina.

KAAD alumnus Guillermo Kerz is Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs at the Universidad Católica de Santa Fe (UCSF) in Argentina and Professor of Gynaecology. *KAAD alumna Dr Ana Maria Bonet* is a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Research in Argentina (CONICET) and Professor of Law at the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences (IHUCSO) in Santa Fe. *Ana Maria Bonet* focuses on legal issues in public health management and environmental law. She incorporates elements of the concept of integral ecology into her academic work. She has also played a leading role in setting up the alumni group of the same name ('Ecologia Integral'). *Guillermo Kerz* has excelled in international scientific networking in public health, drawing on KAAD alumni from many countries as an integrative figure in our Latin American network and expanding the impact of KAAD's funding policy. For example, KAAD alumni who have completed the Master's programme in International Health at Heidelberg University are employed at UCSF for at least two years after their return to support their reintegration. In addition, *Guillermo Kerz* was instrumental in founding the alumni group 'Global Health' ('Salud Global').



The two award winners are exemplary networkers in Argentina, between Latin American countries and between Latin America and Germany. Their commitment promotes academic life in a provincial region and strengthens KAAD structures far beyond Argentina's borders.