



Edition 221 – February 2024

Good News: Anti-Semitism and the State Constitution

After suspending the anti-discrimination clause for publicly funded cultural institutions, the Berlin Senate has announced further steps to effectively combat hatred against Jews and Israel. Berlin's Governing Mayor Kai Wegner (CDU) reiterated his call for the fight against anti-Semitism to be anchored as a state goal in the country's constitution. The discussion about the so-called anti-Semitism clause shows "that it is more important than ever to take a clear stance," emphasized Wegner. A change to the state constitution is now being discussed in the coalition, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Prayer: Thank God for this clear stand from the Governing Mayor; Pray that the project is successful

The new Senate members: Christian Gaebler, Senator for Urban Development, Building and Housing, SPD

We hereby end our series on new Senate members, which has been in office since April 2023. Christian Gaebler (SPD) has been Berlin's Senator for Urban Development, Building and Housing since April 2023. The 59-year-old engineer previously worked as State Secretary in the Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing for almost 1.5 years. Gaebler is a Protestant, born in West Berlin and has been a member of the SPD since 1981. In the House of Representatives, he was most recently part of the left wing of his party. Gaebler is a member of numerous clubs and associations - including the German Red Cross, the Arbeiterwohlfahrt and football clubs such as Hertha BSC and 1. FC Union. In the 1990s, Gaebler worked as a consulting traffic planner. His new position as Senator for Construction brings with it major challenges: above all, the tense housing market in Berlin. Gaebler wants to further advance the Senate's framework law for the socialization of large Berlin housing companies.

Prayer:

- **Pray for wise decisions for a social and sustainable housing policy in Berlin**
- **Pray for successful measures for permanently lower rents in Berlin**
- **Pray for more apartments, especially for low-income people**

Broemme New Coordinator for Refugee Affairs

Albrecht Broemme, a native of Darmstadt (born in 1953), was hired by the Berlin fire department in 1977 as a fire trainee. From 2006 until his retirement in 2019 he was President of the Federal Agency for Technical Relief. During Corona, a COVID treatment centre and several vaccination centres were built under his leadership. Since March 2022 he has been the Berlin coordinator for the accommodation of refugees from Ukraine. He received the Federal Cross of Merit and the Order of Merit of the State of Berlin. As a 70-year-old, he felt the request to fill the position indicated great confidence in him. He is called a "knot penetrator." 3,000 new places are to be created by spring 2024. Quotes from him: "I like saying I'm a Christian and I also know what loving your neighbour means, but I don't let anyone trample on me." About his age: "The young can run faster, but the old ones know the way."

Prayer:

- **Pray that he will draw strength and grace from his faith for the good of our city**
- **Pray for success in his responsibilities**
- **Pray for the creation of new suitable places for refugees**

Repeat Election February 11th

A partial repeat of the federal election will take place in Berlin on February 11, 2024. According to a decision by the Federal Constitutional Court, the 2021 election must be rescheduled in around 20 percent of Berlin's electoral districts. This cannot lead to a change in the balance of power in the Bundestag. But some politicians have to worry about their mandate. "If we get low voter turnout, then it will damage our democracy," warned state election officer Bröchler. "Because then it becomes clear that going to the polling station or even voting by post are not considered that important." But voting is important. "We have to show, even under these difficult conditions, that we stand for our democracy." Low voter turnout could also bring higher shares to extreme right-wing parties.

Prayer:

- **Pray for an orderly and correct process**
- **Pray for a high voter turnout**
- **Pray for blessings for the poll workers**
- **Pray that the extreme right will not be successful**

Increase in Right-Wing Attitudes

The “Berlin Monitor” study shows that anti-Islamic, right-wing totalitarian and anti-Semitic attitudes are widespread among the Berlin population. 42 percent agree “strongly” or “somewhat” with the statement that the number of Muslims in Germany is too high. Around 19 percent support the statement: “We should have a Führer.” Four years ago, it was 10 percent. Another result is increasing anti-Semitism in many minds. According to the survey, for example, 15 percent supported the statement “Even today, the influence of the Jews is still too great.” Social Senator Kiziltepe (SPD) said the results caused her great concern. It is clear that racism and anti-Semitism are deeply rooted in the Berlin population. Prevention projects are currently more necessary than ever.

Prayer:

- **Pray for revelation about Jesus' commandment “Love your neighbour”, even if he is strange and different**
- **Pray for determination to spread the gospel**
- **Pray for more courage to confront inhumane attitudes**

Increase in Crime

In mid-January, the Berlin police presented preliminary data for 2023 in their annual crime statistics. There was a significant increase in acts of violence with knives and firearms by three percent to 535,000 cases compared to the previous year, and in the case of knives even by 7 percent to 3,550 acts. A particular increase of 50 percent can be seen in refugee homes, although the number of refugees has only increased by 21 percent. Violence in schools has increased by almost 12 percent and domestic violence by 10 percent. The number of burglaries has also increased enormously, 46 percent more in cellars and attics, 36 percent more in apartments and car thefts. 17 percent increase in coercion and threats (especially from “last generation” climate activists). Youth gang violence has increased by 13 percent. In order to correctly assess these numbers, however, two factors must be taken into account: the population of Berlin has increased and it is unclear whether there were actually more cases of violence or whether more acts were just reported.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the challenging work of the police and protection for the officers**
- **Pray for peace and protection in the refugee shelters**
- **Pray for vigilance among teachers at schools, good helpful reactions and good prevention work with young people**

Görlitzer Park and Surrounding Neighbourhoods

Görlitzer Park is now known beyond Berlin as a drug and crime hotspot. A trial involving an alleged gang rape is currently occupying the media. The Senate then decided to build a fence around the park and lock it at night. The Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district office, the district mayor and many residents are against it because then the drug scene would be pushed out into the surrounding neighbourhoods even more than before. The situation there in the Wrangelkiez is already catastrophic. According to police statistics, the area is a so-called “criminal hotspot”. Drug crimes are number one, followed by burglaries, theft and bodily harm. House entrances are often used as toilets and for injecting hard drugs. Many residents are not only annoyed and feel threatened, but are also considering moving away. According to the district, a “triad” of social measures, a strong support system consisting of prevention measures and the aspect of security, i.e. more police, would help. A group of Christians is also out on the streets in the area offering advice and help and runs the “Café Sehnsucht” together with others.

Prayer:

- **Pray for a reasonable and sustainable solution for the fence around the park**
- **Pray for effective social assistance and prevention**
- **Pray for blessing and spiritual authority for local Christian groups**

Keeping On: Construction of New Refugee Accommodation

Berlin wants to build 30 new refugee accommodations this year in order to accommodate more of them in a humane and “quality-assured” manner instead of in makeshift emergency accommodation

Let’s keep praying that the Senate will make progress on this.

Dates

Feb. 14: Prayer for City Politics, 6-7 pm, Rotes Rathaus, in front of the main entrance

Feb. 17: Israel Day for Berlin and Brandenburg, 10am-3pm, Kreuzkirche Lankwitz (<https://csi-aktuell.de/events/israeltag-berlin-und-brandenburg/>)