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## Press release

### Corona protests: Spiritual motives or existential woes?

**Scholars shed light on different Corona protests in Germany and France – Panel discussion “Pandemic, Freedom, State” in Paris on 10 May – Participation also via Zoom – Organized by German Historical Institute, Goethe Institute and Cluster of Excellence**

**Münster/Paris, 4 May 2023 (exc)** Spiritual motives in Germany, existential woes in France – according to researchers, the Corona protests had very different motivations in the two countries. Lockdowns, masks and vaccination campaigns sparked very different cultures of protest and perceptions of where the problems lay. This is the subject of a Franco-German panel discussion titled “Pandemic, Freedom, State” that will take place in Paris on 10 May. The panel is organized by the German Historical Institute Paris (GHIP), together with the Goethe Institute Paris, and the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” at the University of Münster. Participation is also possible online after registering in Zoom.

“The difference in the Corona protests raises the question of differences in how the two societies understand the state and freedom, and points to different traditions and historical experiences”, says GHIP Director Prof. Dr. Thomas Maissen. “This is what we want to talk about in the panel discussion”. Modern historian Prof. Dr. Silke Mende from the Cluster of Excellence adds: “But we also have to ask ourselves whether there were different presuppositions in the two countries. Were the spiritual motives of the protesters perhaps ignored in France? And why were they so strongly foregrounded in Germany, while social imbalances were often downplayed?”

The panel will include sociologist Nadine Frei (Basel), modern historian Silke Mende from the Cluster of Excellence in Münster, political scientist Yann Raison du Cleuziou (Bordeaux), historian of religion Helmut Zander (Fribourg), and religious scholar Valentine Zuber (Paris). Moderator will be GHIP Director Thomas Maissen.

The event will take place in French, with simultaneous interpretation being planned. Participation in Paris is possible without prior registration; online participation is possible after registering in Zoom. The discussion evening is part of the annual theme “Religious Dynamics” at the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”. (vvm/fbu)

**Caption:** Prof. Dr. Silke Mende (photo: WWU); Prof. Dr. Thomas Maissen (photo: Sébastien Borda)

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### **The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”**

The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” has been investigating since 2007 the complex relationship between religion and politics across eras and cultures. The 140 researchers from 20 disciplines in the humanities and social sciences focus in the funding phase (2019 to 2025) on the “dynamics of tradition and innovation”. They analyze in transepochal studies ranging from antiquity to the present day the conditions and factors that make religion an engine of political and social change. The focus of interest is on Europe and the Mediterranean region, as well as on their entanglements with the Near East, Africa, North and Latin America. The research network is the largest of its kind in Germany; and, of the Clusters of Excellence, one of the oldest and the only one to deal with the issue of religion. It will receive funding of 31 million euros from 2019 to 2025.

### **German Historical Institute Paris**

Founded in 1958, the German Historical Institute Paris (GHIP) is a historical research institute in the centre of Paris. It conducts its own research and supports researchers working on Western European history to carry out research in France or Germany. Other areas of interest are digital history and the history of Africa. Its location, international team, and dense network of partners allow the GHIP to mediate between different academic cultures and to promote an international historiography. The central task of the Institute is to enable researchers from different backgrounds and ages, and with different methodologies, to engage in exchange and dialogue.

### **Max Weber Foundation**

The Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad (MWF) promotes mutual understanding through its support of research in selected countries that focuses on history, cultural studies, economics, and social sciences. It currently runs eleven institutes worldwide as well as other research groups and offices. Its direct proximity to the objects of research and its exchange of different perspectives and approaches enable the MWF to provide the best conditions for cross-border research in the humanities and social sciences.