

German ex-bishop says praying with Taliban beats bombing

by [Anli Serfontein](#) in the [June 28, 2011](#) issue

A former leader of Germany's Protestant community, Margot Kässmann, says she believes that a suggestion to pray with the Taliban by candlelight is "a much better idea than bombing water tank lorries in Kunduz."

The minister drew loud applause from some 5,000 attendees present at a Bible study session and another 1,500 observers outside watching on video screens at the Kirchentag, an ecumenical biennial church festival held this year in early June in Dresden.

"We know that in the end peace can only grow and be achieved by slow, often painful and risky reconciliation processes in which the victims are heard and the perpetrators admit their guilt," she said. Kässmann, the first woman to lead the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD, an umbrella group of Protestant churches), said that perhaps she is naive but added that Jesus also was naive.

She also criticized NATO bombing in Libya, noting that the military actions don't seem to be contributing to a peaceful resolution of that country's political schism.

It's not the first time that Kässmann has criticized overseas military actions by NATO troops. In her New Year sermon at the beginning of 2010, delivered in the newly renovated Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) in Dresden, she caused an uproar when she said "nothing is right" about the deployment of German troops in Afghanistan.

She reiterated her criticisms of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan at the Kirchentag event. "There is no just war, only a just peace," she said. "This requires creativity, time and money."

Kässmann's sharp opposition to military action has ignited an ongoing public debate about Germany's role in Afghanistan.

Some observers suggested that her public criticism led to her being treated more harshly than usual by police during a drinking-while-driving offense last year. She resigned as Lutheran bishop of Hanover as well as head of the EKD after only four months in the latter post. —ENInews