

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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ISHR President Participates in European Union Reception in Timor-Leste and Meets President José Ramos-Horta

Report by Matthias Böhning

Photo galleries of the visit in Timor-Leste:

<https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=25714>, <https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=25691>

(Bonn, 09.07.2026) The President of the International Council of International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) participated in an official reception hosted by the Ambassador of the European Union to Timor-Leste, H.E. Thorsten Bargfrede, on the occasion of the “Celebrating Europe” reception in Dili, Timor-Leste. The event brought together representatives from diplomacy, government, academia, and civil society and provided an important opportunity for international dialogue on democracy, peacebuilding, and human rights cooperation.

During the event, Schirmmacher held special discussions with Francisco da Costa Guterres, the Minister of the Interior of Timor-Leste; Maurício Medeiros de Assis, the Brazilian Ambassador to Timor; and

Edward Wilkinson, the Chargé d’Affaires of the Australian Embassy. Australia is the most important partner and friend of Timor-Leste. Schirmmacher also met with Monsignor Marcel Šmejkal, the Counsellor and Chargé d’Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature in Timor-Leste, who represented the Holy See in France, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil and Greece.

During his visit to Timor-Leste, Schirmmacher also met with the country’s president José Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and one of the internationally most respected advocates for democracy and human dignity.

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Francisco da Costa Guterres, Minister of the Interior of Timor-Leste, and Thomas Schirmmacher © BQ/Schirmmacher

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José Ramos-Horta is an East Timorese politician and Nobel Peace Prize laureate who has been President of Timor-Leste again since 2022. He previously served as President from 2007 to 2012 and played a key role even before his country's independence as the international spokesperson for the independence movement, and later as Foreign Minister and, for a short time, as Prime Minister.

The meeting took place in the broader context of an ISHR-supported research initiative examining how processes of national independence, state-building, and political autonomy can contribute to the strengthening of freedom of religion and fundamental human rights. In correspondence with the European Union delegation prior to the visit, Schirmmacher highlighted Timor-Leste as a particularly important case study because of its comparatively peaceful path to independence and its subsequent democratic consolidation. The discussions with President Ramos-Horta therefore focused not only on Timor-Leste's historical experience, but also on broader questions concerning reconciliation, democratic resilience, religious liberty, and the role of international cooperation in protecting vulnerable populations.

For ISHR, the encounter carried significant strategic relevance. Timor-Leste represents an important example of how democratic institutions and international solidarity can support the development of a society committed to human rights after years of conflict and oppression. President Ramos-Horta has long been recognized internationally for his advocacy of peace, dialogue, and civil liberties, values that closely align with ISHR's mission. The participation of the ISHR President in the European Union reception further strengthened the organization's relationships with diplomatic actors and international partners engaged in the promotion of human rights and religious freedom. Such high-level exchanges contribute to ISHR's ongoing efforts to connect human rights advocacy with international diplomacy, academic research, and practical peacebuilding initiatives in regions undergoing political transformation.

The official Laudate-letter by Schirmmacher for the President of Timor-Leste will follow in the next Bonn Profiles press release.

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Official photograph from the EU External Action Service: EU Ambassador to Timor-Leste Thorsten Bargrede with his wife and Thomas Schirmmacher © BQ/Schirmmacher

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- **Photo 1:** Francisco da Costa Guterres, Minister of the Interior of Timor-Leste, and Thomas Schirmmacher © BQ/Schirmmacher
- **Photo 2:** President José Ramos-Horta, EU Ambassador Thorsten Bargfrede, Archbishop Thomas Schirmmacher © BQ/Schirmmacher
- **Photo 3:** Official photograph from the EU External Action Service: EU Ambassador to Timor-Leste Thorsten Bargfrede with his wife and Thomas Schirmmacher © BQ/Schirmmacher

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