

Bonner Querschnitte

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Laudate for President Ramos-Horta by Thomas Schirmmacher

Photo galleries of the visit in Timor-Leste:

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

(Bonn, 09.07.2026) We reproduce below Thomas Schirmmacher's laudatory speech in honour of His Excellency President José Ramos-Horta, delivered on 16 May 2026.

Laudate for His Excellency President José Ramos-Horta

Your Excellency President José Ramos-Horta,

It is a great privilege to address one of the world's most respected statesmen, a tireless advocate for human dignity, and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate whose life has become synonymous with the struggle for freedom, justice, and reconciliation.

For decades, you devoted yourself to the cause of the people of Timor-Leste during one of the darkest chapters of modern history. While your country suffered occupation, violence, and immense hardship, you carried the voice of your people to governments, international organizations, churches, and civil society across the world. Your unwavering commitment to peaceful advocacy helped ensure that the plight of Timor-Leste would never be forgotten.

Together with many courageous compatriots, you helped lead your nation to independence. Yet what has distinguished you even more has been what followed.

You did not merely help achieve peace—you helped preserve it. Rather than allowing decades of suffering to become a source of hatred or revenge, you chose the far more difficult path of reconciliation, dialogue, and forgiveness.



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

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During Indonesia's occupation of Timor-Leste between 1975 and 1999, scholarly and official estimates indicate that between approximately 90,000 and more than 200,000 Timorese lost their lives through violence, famine, disease, and forced displacement associated with the occupation. In proportion to its population, this represents one of the gravest human tragedies of the late twentieth century.

Against this background, your commitment to reconciliation is nothing short of extraordinary. Even though the current President of Indonesia was among the officers serving with Indonesia's special forces in East Timor during the occupation and has long been associated with allegations by human rights organizations concerning that period, you have consistently extended the hand of friendship to Indonesia. You have demonstrated that genuine reconciliation does not require forgetting history; rather, it requires remembering it while refusing to be imprisoned by it. In doing so, you have shown the world that lasting peace is built not through revenge, but through moral courage, justice, and reconciliation.

Your moral leadership has become an example not only for Southeast Asia but for the entire world. You have shown that peace is not simply the absence of war. It is the presence of justice, respect for human dignity, and the willingness to build a common future even after profound suffering.

Beyond Timor-Leste, you have been an international voice for democracy, human rights, religious freedom, and peaceful coexistence. Your moral authority reaches far beyond the borders of your own nation.

It has been my privilege to know you over many years and to meet you on nume-



Screenshot of the original laudate



José Ramos-Horta & Thomas Schirmmacher in Berlin 2016 © BQ/Schirmmacher

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rous occasions in Germany. Each encounter has confirmed what the world already knows: behind the Nobel Peace Prize, behind the President, and behind the statesman stands a man of remarkable humility, wisdom, kindness, and unwavering integrity.

Your Excellency, your life reminds us that courage can overcome oppression, that forgiveness can overcome hatred, and that hope can triumph over despair.

Your example reminds us that true leadership is measured not by power, but by the ability to transform suffering into reconciliation and former enemies into partners in peace. It is a lesson that our world needs today more than ever.

Thank you for your extraordinary service to your nation, to peace, and to humanity. It is an honour to pay tribute to your remarkable life and legacy.

With the highest regard

Archbishop Prof. Dr. theol. Dr. phil. Thomas Schirmmacher
ISHR President

Downloads and Links

- **Photo 1:** Official photograph from the EU External Action Service – President José Ramos-Horta, EU Ambassador Thorsten Bergfrede, Thomas Schirmmacher © BQ/Schirmmacher
- **Photo 2:** Screenshot of the original laudate
- **Photo 3:** José Ramos-Horta & Thomas Schirmmacher in Berlin 2016 © BQ/Schirmmacher
- Photo galleries of the visit in Timor-Leste: <https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=25714>, <https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=25691>
- BQ 943 – No 48/2026 “ISHR President Participates in European Union Reception in Timor-Leste and Meets President José Ramos-Horta”: <https://bonn-profiles.net/?p=12650>
- Download of the original laudate: <https://bonner-querschnitte.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/2026-07-ISHR-Letter-Schirmmacher-Ramos-Horta.pdf>

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