

# Bonner Querschnitte

## Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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## BQ 790 – Nr. 13/2024

### ISHR President Schirmmacher meets the Ambassador of El Salvador in Berlin

(Bonn, 23.05.2024) In preparation for a Central America tour in September 2024 that includes El Salvador, the President of the International Council of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), Prof. Dr. Thomas Paul Schirmmacher, visited the Ambassador of the Republic of El Salvador, H. E. Florencia E. Villanova de von Oehsen, in Berlin. In addition to an exchange on the situation of religious freedom for all religions, including indigenous peoples, and the issue of drinking water supply in the country, Schirmmacher had above all requested an official account of the imprisonment of 78,000 gang members.



Thomas Paul Schirmmacher and Florencia E. Villanova de von Oehsen at the Embassy of El Salvador in Berlin © BQ/Martin Wamecke

Just a few years ago, El Salvador was one of the most violent countries with the highest murder rate in the world. The murder rate fell from 39 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2019 to 2.4 in 2023. In the whole of North and South America, only Canada is better at 2.1. (For comparison: Japan and Singapore have the lowest murder rates at 0.2, China and Luxembourg at 0.3 and Germany and Indonesia at 0.4). The ubiquitous protection rackets, which affected practically every family, have also almost come to a standstill.

The ambassador explained: “One goal that President Bukele’s government has set itself is to positively change the image of El Salvador abroad. Unfortunately, El Salvador was seen more negatively than positively in the past, because the press and media rarely reported on the good sides of the country and sold themselves better with bad news. But since President Bukele and his cabinet of ministers have declared war on crime and corruption, this image has changed for the better like never before in history. I’m not saying that everything in the press was wrong, but that it was only half the truth. There is also a positive side to El Salvador that is becoming more and more known.”

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Her Eminence Florencia E. Vilanova de von Oehsen worked on three German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) projects in her home country from 1991 to 1997. She joined the diplomatic service of El Salvador in 1997 as an assistant at the embassy in Bonn. Five years later, she was appointed Vice Consul at the Embassy in Berlin. In 2005, Vilanova took up the same position at the Consulate General in Washington, D.C., where she was Consul for the capital, Maryland and Virginia. She returned to Berlin in 2007 as Consul General with the rank of First Secretary. Four years later, she became Doyenne of the Berlin Consular Corps (BCC). In 2016, she was appointed Counsellor Envoy and Chargé d'affaires ad interim for Germany and other countries served from Berlin. In 2017, she became Ambassador of El Salvador for Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and Ukraine.



Thomas Paul Schirmmacher at the Embassy of El Salvador in Berlin © BQ/Schirmmacher

In September, Schirmmacher will give a plenary speech at The Faith & Freedom Summit IV at the Latin American Parliament in Panama City, the body of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. He will discuss religious freedom issues with many Central and South American politicians. The International Institute for Religious Freedom, of which Schirmmacher is President, has one of its offices in Costa Rica, where the Institute's International Director, Prof. Dr. Dennis Petri, works.

### Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1:** Thomas Paul Schirmmacher and Florencia E. Villanova de von Oehsen at the Embassy of El Salvador in Berlin © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 2:** Thomas Paul Schirmmacher at the Embassy of El Salvador in Berlin © BQ/Schirmmacher
- Links on the Faith and Freedom Summit:
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin\\_American\\_Parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_American_Parliament)
  - [https://www.eifrf-articles.org/Press-Release-Faith-and-Freedom-Summit-II\\_a233.html](https://www.eifrf-articles.org/Press-Release-Faith-and-Freedom-Summit-II_a233.html)
  - <https://faithandfreedomsummit.eu/blog-faith-and-freedom>
  - <https://www.nzz.ch/meinung/brutal-erfolgreich-bukele-befriedet-el-salvador-auf-kosten-der-demokratie-oder-bukele-ersetzt-ganterror-durch-staatsterror-ld.1777547>

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- Links on Florencia E. Villanova de von Oehsen:
  - <https://www.diplomatisches-magazin.de/botschafterinnen/florencia-eugenia-vilanova-de-von-oehsen/>
  - [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florencia\\_Eugenia\\_Vilanova\\_de\\_von\\_Oehsen](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florencia_Eugenia_Vilanova_de_von_Oehsen)
  - <https://www.botschafter-berlin.de/el-salvador/>
  - <https://www.diplomatisches-magazin.de/artikel/interview-mit-der-botschafterin-von-el-salvador-ie-florencia-vilanova-de-von-oehsen-el-salvador/>
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJ\\_Bc9ww2YY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJ_Bc9ww2YY)
- Website of the International Society for Human Rights: <https://ishr.org>
- Website of the International Institute for Religious Freedom: <https://iirf.global>

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