

2026 Luxembourg Peace Prize ceremony outline

Chris Evans

What a privilege to be here, and to receive this award on behalf of so many friends and colleagues whose work it recognises. Thank you very much.

The other day I was privileged to see a pre-release showing of a new film. It is directed by a Palestinian from Gaza whose extended family there has been decimated in the bombing. Day after day, as he worked on the film, he would receive devastating news of yet more relatives dying in the rubble.

Yet in the film he tells the story, mostly in their own words, of a British woman whose father, a Member of Parliament, was killed by a bomb intended to kill Mrs Thatcher in Brighton, England, and the Irishman who planted the bomb.

At one point the Irishman describes how he and his friends demonised Mrs Thatcher and her colleagues, making them out to be less than human. “If we hadn’t done that”, he says, “we could never have killed them”. These days, we might call this “othering” – de-humanising another person or another group and painting them as so evil and dangerous that they come to be seen as the cause of our problems and all kinds of extreme measures against them are justified.

The film illustrates how these two people – the victim and the perpetrator - walked this same road, but in the opposite direction. Not de-humanising each other, but re-humanising each other. I think it is a powerful, important film, and I hope you will all be able to see it - and maybe also use it in your peace-making work. It is called “The Hardest Bridge”. Look out for it. It will be released soon.

De-humanising people in this way, “othering”, has become a tactic of choice for many people to gain and retain power. And this is no accident. It has been carefully and skilfully planned on a global basis. The tragedy is that it is often very effective as a route to power.

But it is a hopeless way to solve problems. Real world problems require “the other” (the other group, race, nation, etc.) to be part of the solution, not to be scapegoated.

Simply criticising those who use “othering” is ineffective. It even feeds the us-versus-them narrative. But could we not work together to promote a positive alternative to “othering”? We might even call it “togethering”.

Surely the peace-makers of the world are the natural community to give content to the word “togethering”, using the very principles we know help to build peace – curiosity rather than judgement, refusing to hate, judging myself and my group by the same standards as I use to judge others, and so on.

And we could develop a 'togetherness strategy' so that we will see a day when practitioners of togetherness will be routinely elected and re-elected to power in all our countries. Couldn't we work together on this?

Thank you.