

## HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AT THE POLISH-BELARUSIAN FRONTIER OLD AND NEW DIAGNOSES FROM EXTERNAL EU BORDERS



Photo credit to Anna Maria Binińska, Fall of 2021, Polish-Belarusian border

CMR WEBINAR, December 16-17, 2021, 15:00 - 16:30 (CET)

Conveners: **Kamila Fiałkowska, Karolina Łukasiewicz, Agnieszka Radziwinowiczówna**  
Centre of Migration Research (CMR), University of Warsaw

*Since the summer of 2021 the situation at the Polish-Belarusian border has been in the spotlight of the local, EU and international observers, politicians, activists, journalists and researchers. Polish regulations prohibit the presence of media and activists in the border zone. The death toll of this crisis increases with the use of pushbacks by state authorities and freezing temperatures in the primordial Polish forest. The situation in Poland reminds of crises on the Southern borders of the EU, where pushbacks are in use and the term hybrid war has been applied to justify border militarisation and criminalisation of people seeking international protection. At the same time, the situation in Poland contrasts with Germany's response to the 2016 crisis and the current situation when asylum cases have been lawfully processed.*

*This two-part webinar aims to discuss the ongoing border crisis on the Polish-Belarusian frontier and reflect on lessons learnt from other EU crises, including at the Greek-Turkish border, the Balkan route and in 2016 Germany. This will improve our understanding of the tools used to manage the past and present humanitarian crises by the EU and state actors. Building on the perspective of Greece and Balkan countries (pushbacks, reception of asylum seekers), Turkey (transit country, reception), and Germany (reception context), the panellists will explain how various tools operate on the ground and what can we learn from them to manage the ongoing and forthcoming crises.*

**PART I:** 16 December 2021, 15:00 - 16:30 (CET)

**Polish, Greek and the Balkan border crises - pushbacks policy and human rights violations**

Chair: Kamila Fiałkowska, Moderator: Agnieszka Radziwinowiczówna

[Click here to register and get the link to the Part I of the Webinar](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/CMRborders>

The roundtable gathers five excellent speakers with first-hand experience of documenting human rights violations on the external borders of the European Union. Witold Klaus and Marta Górczyńska from The Border Group will talk about the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border. The roundtable will serve to exchange the experience with researchers documenting border violence on the Greek - Turkey border and along the Balkan route: Evgenia Kouniaki and Eleni Takou from Human Rights 360 and Chloe Powers from Border Violence Monitoring Network. During this roundtable some of the most important findings of two recently-published reports will be discussed: [Humanitarian Crisis on the Polish-Belarusian Border](#) by the Border Group and [The doctrine of the 'instrumentalization' of refugees. The borders of Evros in the era of the securitization of borders](#) by HumanRights360.

**PART II:** 17 December 2021, 15:00 - 16:30 (CET)

**Migration governance on the ground. Lessons learned from the past and ongoing crises.**

Chair: Agnieszka Radziwinowiczówna, Moderator: Karolina Łukasiewicz

[Click here to register and get the link to the Part II of the Webinar](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/CMRborders2>

This roundtable gathers excellent scholars: Sabine Hess, Electra Petracou, Ela Gökalp Aras and Karolina Sobczak-Szelc who will discuss lessons learned from the past and present experience with migration governance in Germany, Greece, Turkey and Poland. The speakers will talk about responding to a border crisis on the Greek-Turkish border, and about asylum reception in Germany and Poland. They will also discuss the future of refugee protection mechanisms at the EU border and how to ensure humanitarian treatment of asylum seekers.

**Speakers**

**Witold Klaus** (Institute of Law Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, CMR UW) – holds PhD in law, he is a professor at the Institute of Law Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences (head of the Department of Criminology and of the Migration Law Research Centre) and a research fellow in the Centre of Migration Research at Warsaw University; He is a lawyer, criminologist, migration researcher and activist - he was one of the founders and currently serves a member of the Board for the Association for Legal Intervention (a chairman between 2005 and 2019).

**Marta Górczyńska** (University of Warsaw, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights) - human rights lawyer, migration researcher and PhD candidate in legal studies at the University of Warsaw. Specialising in the field of international and EU law on asylum and migration. Author and co-author of numerous publications and reports; coordinator of several research projects; team member and coordinator of monitoring missions to the borders and detention facilities for migrants. Academic focus: access to territory and asylum procedure.

**Eleni Takou** (Human Rights 360) - is co-founder and Deputy Director of the Greek NGO [HumanRights360](#). She has worked in the Advocacy and Programs sector of

several NGOs. During 2015, she served as Chief of Staff of the Minister for Migration Policy in Greece. Prior to this, she has been coordinating the Racist Violence Recording Network, a coalition of CSOs under the auspices of the UNHCR Office in Greece and the Greek National Commission for Human Rights. She has also been a consultant on issues of statelessness for UNHCR Greece. Her work is focused on refugee protection, migration, hate crime, strategic communication and anti racism advocacy. She is co-writer of the book [Persistent Myths about Migration in Greece](#) and co-editor of the book [X Them Out - The Black Map of Racist Violence](#).

**Evgenia Kouniaki** (Human Rights 360) is a Lawyer at HumanRights360. She focuses on monitoring and reporting cases of illegal practises at the European land borders of Evros, as well as hate crime across the country. She is a graduate of the Law School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and of Social Anthropology of the Panteion University of Athens. She is currently enrolled in the Postgraduate Program in Social and Cultural Anthropology at Panteion University. She was also a member of the legal team of the civil litigation in the Golden Dawn's trial representing the Egyptian victims.

**Chloe Powers** (Border Violence Monitoring Network) is a researcher, activist, and visual artist based in Athens, Greece. She is a member of the Border Violence Monitoring Network, documenting violence against people-on-the-move in the Balkans and in Greece. Her research interests include borders and border securitization, prisons, and insurgent mobilities, citizenships, and city-making practises. Chloe holds an academic background in anthropology and feminist studies, as well as five years of experience working with different research institutes or in “field” contexts in the eastern Mediterranean (Egypt, Turkey, Greece). Aside from this, she is involved in self-organized mutual aid, feminist, and anti-eviction structures in Athens, Greece.

#### **PART II:**

**Sabine Hess** (the Göttingen [Centre for Global Migration Studies](#)) is a full professor of Cultural Anthropology/European Ethnology. She specialises in migration and border studies focusing on forms of transnationalism and Europeanisation with a specific interest in the external border region in South-Eastern Europe. She is a founding member of the European interdisciplinary “Network on critical migration and border studies” (kritnet) and directs the interdisciplinary “Laboratory on migration and border regime studies” at the University of Goettingen that provides space for regular discussions on theories and research in the respective fields for 18 PhD students and Postdocs.

**Electra Petracou** (University of the Aegean) is an Associate Professor in Political Geography at [the Department of Geography](#), and Co-director of the Population Movements Laboratory. Her main current areas of interest include migration theories, migration and politics at the national and European level, asylum,

borders power, control policies and security, citizenship and participation, decision making and population movements. She has participated as a senior researcher and principal investigator in a number of projects related to asylum and migration issues and has collaborations with other Academic institutions as well as International and European Organizations and NGOs.

**Ela Gökalp Aras** (the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul ([SRII](#))) is a Senior Research Fellow and has been a principal investigator of the [RESPOND Project](#). Her research is focused on migration and refugee policies (in particular the EU and Turkish asylum and immigration policies), international migration (irregular and transit) and asylum regimes, border management, citizenship, and security (in particular human security). Her recent publications include [Turkey’s Response to Syrian Mass Migration: A Neoclassical Realist Analysis](#), and [The European Union’s Externalisation Policy in the Field of Migration and Asylum: Turkey as a Case Study](#).

**Karolina Sobczak-Szelc** (University of Warsaw) is an Assistant Professor in the Centre of Migration Research. Karolina’s research interests include forced migration studies; environmental migrations; adaptation strategies to environmental changes and limitations; integration of forced migrants, especially from the MENA region. She is a leading researcher in a Polish component of the HORIZON 2020 RESPOND project that investigates the governance of recent mass migration and its implications for the EU, its member states and third countries. She is also a PI on a project [“A multi-directional analysis of refugee/IDP camp areas based on HR/VHR satellite data”](#).