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*Criminalising Solidarity: Border Securitisation, Non-State Actors, and Vernacular Humanitarianism in Europe*

**Abstract:**

Border securitisation, externalisation, and the criminalisation of humanitarian assistance in migration contexts have become increasingly prominent features of European migration governance. This paper explores the phenomenon of the criminalisation of solidarity through a comparative overview of these practices in France, Italy, Greece, and Spain, alongside the liminal case of Serbia as a non-EU transit country along the Balkan route. While in EU migration hotspots, the criminalisation of solidarity is predominantly institutionalised through legal and judicial frameworks, the Serbian case demonstrates how humanitarian assistance can be constrained through informal and extralegal governance practices, producing effects comparable to formal criminalisation. By examining the impact of these practices on non-state actors, primarily humanitarian NGOs, the paper highlights how policies of border securitisation and the criminalisation of humanitarian aid not only target irregular migration, but actively restructure the space for humanitarian action. It argues that such policies not only have severe consequences for migrants and humanitarian actors, but also reshape understandings of the rule of law, human rights, and human dignity. Drawing on the concept of *vernacular humanitarianism*, solidarity is conceptualised as an established, non-institutionalised practice that increasingly becomes an object of security governance. This perspective allows for an overview of how everyday practices of care and assistance are transformed into sites of political contestation, where moral obligation collides with legal restriction and security rationalities. Placed in the context of broader political and cultural transformations of migration governance, the paper explores whether these practices undermine solidarity-based forms of action and contribute to shifting collective values in contemporary Europe. Finally, it examines how the suppression of humanitarian work reconfigures cultural narratives of care, responsibility, and ethics within increasingly securitised migration regimes.

**Key words:** *securitisation, border policy, migration, criminalisation, solidarity*

**Short biography:**

Mia Abdić is a second-year PhD student at University of Belgrade, Department of Social Policy and Social Work. She holds a Master's degree in Social Work, with a background in psychotraumatology. Since 2015, she has gained extensive field experience supporting migrants and refugees in France, Montenegro, and Serbia. In 2016, she attended the summer school "*Migrations- Trauma in Transitions*" in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her professional experience includes work in safeguarding and child protection, psychosocial support, and advocacy within NGOs and international organizations. In 2024, she attended *Summer school in*

*Forced Displacement*, in Belgrade, Serbia, in collaboration with Boston University, which influenced her further research orientation. She presented paper “*Criminalisation of Solidarity: How Current Migration Policies Influence Humanitarian Work*” at an international conference in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently, her main research interest is the way restrictive policies can affect the capacities of those in helping professions and how they impact values of solidarity and empathy in society. Her work is based on her personal frontline experience.