

IPW LECTURES

Humanitarian Borderwork

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Abstract:

Europe's borders have become places of suffering and death as safe and legal routes are closed to those fleeing conflict, persecution and poverty. As a result a range of actors from state agencies, humanitarian organisations, volunteer NGOs and individual citizens undertake a range of practices to relieve this suffering and prevent deaths. I call these practices 'humanitarian borderwork'. Here humanitarian principles concerned with saving lives, alleviating suffering and bearing witness are enacted in border settings. These border in turn are the products of a range of practices by people, organisations and states. They are produced and reproduced through constant work, referred to as borderwork. The enactment of humanitarian principles changes borderwork from work concerned with stopping, defending and securing territory to work concerned with securing lives. This lecture aims to introduce the concept of humanitarian borderwork and analysis if and how it reorients border practices and politics.

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