



Call for Papers

Human Rights in Migration Societies

Exploring the Intersection of Human Rights and Migration in Law, Politics, and Everyday Life

Conference held on 18–20 September 2024 at Justus Liebig University Giessen,
organized by the Research Group “Human Rights Discourse
in Migration Societies” (MeDiMi)

References to human rights have become increasingly prominent in migration-related discourse and practices. Actors in migration societies frequently use the language of human rights to articulate their interests and goals. Concurrently, other actors challenge such rights-based claims to migrants’ inclusion. In the legal system, for example, doctrinal arguments based in human rights law and strategic litigation at the European Court of Human Rights play important roles in shaping European immigration and refugee law. In various contexts of political action, migrant and non-migrant activists, diaspora members and policymakers refer to human rights when making political claims, pursuing transitional justice, or legitimizing inclusionary and exclusionary migration and border policies. The advance of human rights discourse is also occurring in professional and other everyday contexts, where the attitudes of actors within migration societies are actually expressed and formed, such as in school contexts, in social work, and in social and traditional media. At the same time, however, European migration laws and policies are becoming increasingly restrictive, leading to human rights violations on a daily basis, discourses of exclusion, and a widespread perception of a “human rights backlash”. How do these observations match?

The research group “Human Rights Discourse in Migration Societies” (MeDiMi) analyzes this *humanrightization* across ten projects by combining legal analysis, social-science research, and cultural studies. We aim to illuminate the interwoven processes of legalization, politicization, and everyday practice of human rights in migration societies. The research group also investigates the interplay of human rights discourse and counter-discourses in conflicts relating to migration. For a more detailed description of MeDiMi’s research agenda, see [here](#) (English) or [here](#) (German).

This multidisciplinary conference aims to explore the nexus of human rights and migration by starting a dialogue with other researchers working in related fields and facilitating exchange across established

communities and disciplinary boundaries. More specifically, we are eager to learn from other scholars and activists about their approaches to human rights and/or migration research, including forced migration studies and refugee law.

We invite researchers at all career stages and of all backgrounds – from doctoral researchers to senior academics and independent activist-researchers – to join us in exploring how human rights norms, semantics, images, and narratives function in the context of migration and how this affects contemporary societies. Contributions can come from people working in legal studies, the social sciences or the humanities, including but not limited to legal doctrine, comparative law, legal history, sociology, political science, international relations, anthropology, cultural studies, media and communication studies, global health, and educational research.

Contributions should explicitly address the intersection of human rights and migration. We are particularly interested in empirical and doctrinal case studies that analyze how human rights are made relevant in different contexts (from grassroots activism to the UN level), but also welcome theoretical reflections on the contested role of human rights in migration societies. Regarding the regional focus, we are particularly interested in contributions that analyze processes in Europe as well as in comparative studies that concern the MENA region or North and South America. Presentations can build on previously published research.

The conference will take place at Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany, from 18 September 2024 (evening sessions) until 20 September 2024 (noon session). The conference combines plenary sessions (in English) and parallel panel meetings (in English or German). Contributions will be grouped according to thematic, disciplinary or language criteria.

Panelists are expected to attend in person. A limited number of travel scholarships will be made available to researchers without mobility funding (please indicate this in your application). Conference fees will be waived for all panelists.

Please send your proposal until 31 January 2024 to MeDiMi@recht.uni-giessen.de in a single PDF. Proposals must include an abstract of max. 300 words, a provisional title, five key words, and a brief CV/bio note (including relevant publications, if any). For questions, please refer to the address above.