

INVESTIGATIVE DOCUMENTARY

OTHER PEOPLE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2021, the European Union's Green Border countries Lithuania, Latvia and Poland experienced an increase in migratory flows. These include people from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, as well as Cameroon, Cuba, India, Sri Lanka and other countries. Under the regime of Belarusian dictator Aliaksandr Lukashenko, they have been directed towards the borders of EU

On 3 August 2021 Lithuanian border guards were given the right to carry out pushbacks of migrants. On 10 August, Latvian officers started carrying out the pushbacks. The Lithuanian Border Guard Service reports that since the beginning of the „migration crisis“ Lithuanian border guards have prevented 22,177 immigrants from entering the country illegally.

The pushbacks are violating EU law.

At the end of August 2022, the corpse of a Sri Lankan migrant was found in Vilnius district, Lithuania. In spring 2023, the body of an Indian national was found in Ignalina district.

We've investigated the human rights situation in Lithuania focusing on missing and dead cases of the people on the move and collecting the testimonies of migrants themselves, medics, humanitarian volunteers, video and audio recordings and scarce documents. What we found was confirmed by reports from international humanitarian organizations and research by scientists.

We have learnt that people who move to the EU for various reasons end up being tricked by smugglers in the forest, families with children are pushed back, people are pushed into the forest even from the Lithuania's capital, and are subjected to violence in the border forests, both by Belarusian and by EU border guards.



A woman with long, wavy blue hair is shown in profile, looking towards the right. She is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a forest with many trees, some with thick trunks. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

RELEVANCE

Migration to EU countries takes place along several well-known migration routes, but the migration route through Lithuania, Latvia and Poland is new and not much researched. In the investigation, we reveal and present multiple testimonies about actions at the EU border - violence and execution of pushbacks.

On the border with Belarus, not only pushbacks are carried out, but also the so-called "ping pong" is played, when EU officials push people back to Belarus, and Belarusian border guards do not allow them to return to Minsk and leave the border region - pushing them towards the borders of the EU intimidating them with weapons and violence. This creates a life-threatening situation when migrants remain in the forest for a long time without food or water. People freeze their limbs, which are then amputated. They get poisoned by the swamp water and plants they are forced to eat. They also disappear without a trace, some people die in such situations.

A unique phenomenon in the region is that laws that conflict with the EU have been enshrined in local legislation, thus creating a precedent. Neither journalists, nor doctors, nor independent observers are allowed to work on the EU border between Lithuania and Latvia with Belarus, so this field becomes a dangerous space for violations of the law, as evidenced by the sources we interviewed. Information about dead and missing migrants is also not provided to journalists.

WHY SHOULD THIS STORY BE TOLD NOW?

Migration flows to the EU are increasing due to wars, climate change and other reasons, and the situation at the Green Border and the pushback policy have not changed since 2022. This topic will only become more relevant. In both Lithuania and Latvia, migration is primarily assessed through the prism of national security. There is practically no discussion on human rights in these countries, and a "news desert" has formed around the topic of the situation at the border.

Frostbite and injuries sustained in the forest leave people disabled, and the officially announced death toll (6 border deaths in Lithuania and 7 in Latvia) is just the tip of the iceberg. Pushbacks and violence are not documented in any way by border guards, which makes it impossible to carry out law enforcement investigations and find missing or dead people.

The experiences of people on the move, the testimonies of scientists and organizations providing humanitarian aid reveal the human rights violations taking place on the EU's border every day. The aim of our investigation is to draw attention to the rapidly deteriorating situation of human rights and freedom of speech in the states of the region and the implementation of EU migration policy at the Green border of the EU.

KEY INTERVIEWS

01



Alexandra Ancite - Jepifanova, PhD, Queen Mary University of London - researcher on European migration and asylum law.

02



Kyle McNally, PhD - Humanitarian Affairs Advisor at Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

03



„Sienos grupė“ and GPB - Humanitarian organisations from Lithuania and Latvia.

04



People on the move from Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, India, Sri Lanka, Morocco, Cuba.

WHAT MAKES AN INVESTIGATION UNIQUE

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a bright yellow sweater, is looking off to the side with a serious expression. Behind her, another woman with dark hair is covering her eyes with her hand, suggesting a somber or emotional scene. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a doorway or a wall with some colorful decorations.

The state institutions do not cooperate with journalists on this topic, information about human rights violations at the EU border almost does not appear in the public space, which is why such a detailed investigation is unique in the "news desert" situation.

The investigation carried out by local journalists provides information directly from the scene of events - migrant camps, medical facilities, border forest.

The genre of investigative journalism is combined with documentary filmmaking. The camera movements reproduce the videos filmed by the people on the move, and the film is created like an investigation diary. It allows viewers not only to learn information, but also to feel people's experiences.

THE CORE TEAM



Irma Bogdanovičiūtė is a Lithuanian documentarian and freelance journalist with 5 years of experience in the TV and media field.

Irma's recent works include "I LOVE YOU", an international investigation and documentary about romance scam in Lithuania and Slovakia, "OUR WAR", a 9-episode documentary and interview series about war in Ukraine and its effects on Lithuanians and Ukrainian refugees and "NO LOVIN IF BEATIN", an investigation on domestic violence in Lithuania. All the films and investigations were published by major Lithuanian newsrooms 15min and DELFI.



Maria Kugel is a Latvian journalist and a freelance correspondent for Radio Liberty in the Baltic States ("Радио Свобода") and for the online publication Novaya Gazeta Baltiya ("Новая газета Балтия").



ARTICLE PUBLICATIONS

DELFI LITHUANIA, July 9, 2024

Disenfranchised: the pushback policy - a complete lack of humanity and disregard for life with the blessing of politicians

DELFI LITHUANIA, July 2, 2024

„The unvarnished reality on the Belarusian border: the last clothes used to light fire, bleeding stomachs and miscarriages in the woods“

DELFI LITHUANIA, June 25, 2024

Disappearances and deaths on the Lithuanian border: frozen limbs, starvation and marsh water poisoning are people's reality

NOVAYA GAZETA, October 4, 2023

„Group 36“

NOVAYA GAZETA, November 7 2023

"Do the best you can"

People are dying and going missing on the border of Belarus and the EU, and their loved ones cannot find the truth"

NOVAYA GAZETA, December 6, 2023

„How they talk about migrants and refugees on the Belarusian "Green border" in Latvia“

NOVAYA GAZETA, December 4, 2023

"Death is not shown to anyone." In Latvia, authorities are silent about the deaths of migrants in border areas"

NOVAYA GAZETA, January 30, 2024

„Towards a better future at any cost. Why refugees are sent along a deadly route through Belarus“

NOVAYA GAZETA, July 12, 2023

"Everyone we asked for help beat us." Journey to EU's eastern border ends for Indian citizen in wheelchair"

FACTS AND CONTACT



Title: OTHER PEOPLE

The Official Trailer: [TRAILER](#)

Link to series: [here](#)

Length: 3 series (53', 62', 55'). Net time ~ 170 minutes

Format: 1920 x 1080

Primal language: English, Lithuanian, Russian, Hindi, Afghan, Arabic

English .SRT available: Yes

Producer/Director: Irma Bogdanovičiūtė

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