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Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

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Since the summer of 2015, the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea, that are only a few miles from the coasts of Turkey, and the small village of Idomeni, which is next to Greece's northern border with Macedonia, have become directly associated to the so-called refugee crisis. Thousands of refugees mainly from war-torn areas in the wider Middle East were arriving daily in the country's islands in their attempt to reach safety, and once they left the islands they moved towards Greece's northern borders. The images that were broadcasted from these areas immediately became associated with human loss, sorrow and trauma but also hope, perseverance and global acts of solidarity. At the same time, since 2015 we also observed the rise of barbwire fences as Member States of the European Union (EU) and their neighbours relentlessly tried to keep those arriving away from their territory.

In 2015, I was working as a freelance journalist, reporting on the refugee crisis from Greece's northern border in Idomeni. This chapter is my attempt to reflect on my understanding of borders. For this reason, I examine the way the refugee crisis unfolded in Greece from 2015 until the end of 2017 through my ethnographic observations as a journalist on the ground. However, this chapter is not about the crisis in Greece; it is a series of observations of the violent nature of borders and their impact on those on the move. In order to do that, I recount the story of the refugee crisis in five acts: five stories of individuals I met throughout these years that showcase the violent nature of the border. I do not intend to examine all aspects of the crisis – something like this would be impossible. But I do intend to look at the way borders create violence and the consequences of this for the people on the move. Due to the fact that I focus on people's movements in Greece since 2015, I refer to those on the move as refugees defying the legal limitations of the term because the majority of them but not all came from war-torn areas.^[1] At the end of the chapter, I explore the notion of a no borders politics as a method of fighting the violence created by borders.

Violent Borders and Traumatic Experiences: A Story in Five Acts

Act I: Violent Lands

In the morning of 8 May 2015 a local volunteer and activist who was helping refugees at the Greek-Macedonian border^[2] was asking for supplies and help in a Facebook post. According to that post, hundreds of Syrian refugees were found locked inside a freight train wagon and they were taken to the police station of Idomeni. At that period, I was working as a field producer on a different story about a gang that was kidnapping refugees in Macedonia^[3], so that story's reporter, Ramita Navai, and I thought this incident may be connected to our research. It turned out that it was not related, but that incident exposed a different side of the migration route and the methods used to move people throughout borders. Those who were at the police station had paid thousands of Euros to smugglers in order to take them directly to Germany by train. However, when the train entered Macedonia it was checked by the police who in turn sent it back to Greece without alerting the Greek authorities of those locked inside. Hours later, the Greek authorities found the train abandoned near the border (Field Notes, 8 May 2015).

Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

I was close to losing my family and my life. When the train stopped, a police officer opened the door. He saw us but he didn't say anything. He then closed the door and told the driver to return to Greece. When the train arrived in Greece, we were abandoned inside the wagon, one of those who were at the police station exclaimed during a short interview (Field Notes, 8 May 2015).

That time must have been the fifth time I was at the Greek-Macedonian border since the first time I went to the area on January 2015. Incidents of violence were evident as the refugees who were stuck between the borders always recounted various stories with violent incidents; from beatings and muggings by the Macedonian authorities to being shot (Field Notes, January 2015; April 2015; May 2015). Yet that was the first time that an incident that involved hundreds of people had happened; at least, as far as I was aware at that particular moment.

Every time I visited the Greek-Macedonian border, I was trying to figure out the dynamics of what was happening and where it might all lead. I think the train incident can put the people's movement dynamics at that time into perspective. First of all, the borders were closed; this means refugees had no option other than moving throughout borders in an irregular manner – without any form of legal papers that would have given them the right to cross borders. For this reason, the only way one could cross was by paying someone else to help them cross without getting caught by the authorities; thus people's movements were controlled by smuggling networks who had the know-how of moving irregularly. For example, the incident with the train was one of the methods; someone – possibly a smuggler – had paid train officials in order to hide people inside wagons (for more on how that was done, see Navai 2015). Each one of those in the wagons had paid approximately 1200 Euros in order to go from Greece to Germany, considering there were almost 200 people, the smuggling network that was responsible for this made 240,000 Euros per trip; thus, closed borders was a profitable business for criminal networks (Field Notes, January 2015; April 2015; May 2015). It is important to note here that this concerns the crossing of the Greek-Macedonian border by hiding in a train as prices differed depending on the type of crossing. It is also important to add that crossing the sea border was a different side of the same journey that included different prices and other methods.

Apart from the way smuggling networks were taking advantage of closed borders, the number of people who arrived was rising; local activists said that one day 100 people would arrive and the next up to 500. Moving inside Greece was restricted, as those without papers or a residency permit could not take public transportation, which led to people paying extra money to taxi drivers who took the risk, or even walking for hours to the borders.^[4] Physical violence was evident as people were beaten by the authorities or by criminal gangs. Yet, hundreds of people were daily defying both restrictions and violence, and kept on arriving in Greece with the tolerance of the authorities, as their movement was no longer a secret for anyone in the areas near Greece's borders.

A large number of researchers support the idea that movement is a political act and those at the centre of it are political actors as they defy politically imposed restrictions in their struggle to move throughout borders (see for example Agier 2016; King 2016; Hess 2017; Jones 2016). Indeed, what was happening at the beginning in 2015 was an act of political resistance as thousands of people resisted state imposed laws and restrictions and marched towards their ultimate goal: a safe area where they could build their lives from the beginning. When one person was down, the rest would help them, when their attempt was unsuccessful, they would keep on trying until they succeeded. In fact, this form of perseverance was successful in the end.

Act II: Violent Seas

The autumn of 2015 was entirely different from the beginning of that year. In July 2015, the authorities of Macedonia passed a law that allowed refugees who entered the country to freely move in it for three days (Associated Press 2015). That meant that those who were entering Macedonia through the Greek-Macedonian border were legally allowed to be in the country for three days. In my understanding that was the beginning of the open borders period^[5] in the Balkan Route (Associated Press 2015). One of the immediate impacts of this policy was the gradual disappearance of smuggling networks throughout the route. At that time, I had met several refugees who were on their way to Northern European countries; contrary to those who crossed borders before summer, they managed to reach their final destinations relatively faster and most of them without paying excessive amounts to smuggling networks.

Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

In September 2015, thousands of refugees, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq were arriving on the Greek islands on a daily basis (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2016). Although the free passage through the Balkan Route had eliminated gang violence throughout the border, the situation at sea was different. The rising number of people who crossed meant a rising demand for smugglers who operated on the Turkish side of the Aegean. The higher demand meant different prices and services. As a result, those who did not have enough money to guarantee their safe passage put their lives at risk by wearing cheap fake life vests and using unsafe rubber boats (Hubbard 2015; BBC News 2016).

At that moment, I had not been to the Greek islands as I was focused on reporting from the northern part of the border. However, I had gained multiple contacts with refugees, reporters, government officials and activists in order to be as well-informed as possible for someone not on the ground.

On 2 September, I received a message on Facebook from Zahra, a 19-year-old refugee girl that I met at the bus station in Thessaloniki. 'Hi, I need your help', she said. Zahra had already arrived in Sweden so at the beginning I was confused about why she may need my help. Zahra had settled in Sweden, however, members of her extended family had fled from Syria a few weeks before she contacted me. When she sent me that message, her sister-in-law was in a sinking rubber boat in the middle of the Aegean Sea. None of the passengers could get hold of the Greek authorities and time was running out. They could, however, contact their families and friends and as such that message reached me. Due to the urgency of the situation help had to be sent immediately. Zahra wrote:

Call the police. Please we need help. I am waiting. There are children and they are afraid. The boat is destroyed. Please hurry, they are drowning. They are wearing life vests but they are not so strong. They can't hold them for long time.

I called one of my contacts in the Greek military who in turn informed the Greek Coast Guard. I had already sent him their location, as Zahra had sent me a Google Maps screenshot that had the coordinates on it. Their rescue was not an easy task, as they had to be located in the middle of the night. That night, the authorities rescued more than one boat. Since that day, I have had several discussions with my contact from the military regarding that incident. As he mentioned one time, he felt responsible for those people's rescue despite not being directly involved. I felt the same. That sense of responsibility for someone else's life would have been even stronger for Zahra as it involved a person she knew well, but also, an experience she herself went through – the precariousness of crossing the sea in a rubber boat.

Act III: Violent Camps

The previous incident took place during the same period that the German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced the opening of the borders for refugees who were fleeing conflict (Hall and Lichfield 2015; De La Baume 2017; Dockery 2017). Largely because of Angela Merkel's statement, the number of those who decided to cross the borders reached new levels. In 2015 more than one million people reached Europe through the Mediterranean Sea including the Aegean Sea; of those an estimated number of 800,000 people arrived through Greece (Clayton and Holland 2015). The open border policy that created the Balkan Route provided a safe and fast way for people to reach their final destinations as the route was no longer controlled by smugglers. A couple of months later, however, borders started shutting down unexpectedly as European countries were not able to cope with the rising numbers of arrivals (Karakoulaki 2015; Siegfried 2015). The final straw came in March 2016 with the introduction of the EU-Turkey statement that was drafted in such a way as to intentionally reduce refugee arrivals (AFP 2016). The EU-Turkey Statement, which is more commonly known as the EU-Turkey Deal, is an agreement between Turkey and the EU regarding Syrian refugees. In short, for each Syrian refugee who returns from Greece or Italy to Turkey, one Syrian refugee from Turkey is accepted to the EU.^[6]

It is important to note that as people were arriving in thousands at the buffer zone of the Greek-Macedonian border, and their crossing was officiated by the Greek and Macedonian authorities, there was a need to set up several facilities including medical centres or waiting areas. That need created what became known as the camp of Idomeni – from now on Idomeni – which took its name from the nearby village. Because Greece did not at that moment

Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

officially recognise Idomeni as an official camp, it did not built any facilities for the people who were there. For that reason, humanitarian organisations, and mainly the Médecins Sans Frontières [Doctors without Borders] (MSF), started building emergency infrastructure. By the beginning of January 2016, the camp had expanded throughout the fields near the buffer zone (Field Notes, August 2015–May 2016).

Between the end of February and the beginning of May 2016, I was going to the Greek-Macedonian border at least three times a week, if not on a daily basis. Following the new developments, thousands of people were stranded in Idomeni and around March 2016 thousands of people were in limbo (Karakoulaki 2016b; 2016c; 2016d). Information by official authorities was limited, if not non-existent, and day after day it became clear that there was no plan by either the Greek government or the European Union. The situation at the time created a cloud of uncertainty and this, along with the harsh winter conditions, seemed to take its toll on people. Protests, either large or small, that resulted in violence were almost daily – fake rumours about the opening of the borders even had severe results (Tosidis 2016). Becoming a refugee already has psychological implications, thus the ongoing uncertainty of that time seemed to take its toll on those stranded (Papadopoulos 2007; Field Notes, 18 March 2016; Karakoulaki 2016c). I still vividly remember when I first met Ibrahim, a former interpreter for the US forces in Iraq, who broke down in tears as we were talking:

I feel very stressed about everything. I am 26 and I haven't lived anything. When I was in Iraq, I was studying and working at the same time. Then I went to Turkey, and I was working for nothing. When I finally left Turkey and crossed the sea, I thought I made it. I thought I would go to Germany and I would bring my wife. Then I came here... I came to nothing. I don't know what I will do (Karakoulaki 2016c).

This was not the first time that someone broke down in tears in the middle of a discussion and it turned out it would not be the last. The common factor among all times was the fact that it occurred when there was some sort of disruption of refugees' movement throughout borders.

According to Renos Papadopoulos (2007), the closest theory that a psychologist can use in order to describe what is happening to refugees during their flight is trauma theory. However, refugee trauma and psychological trauma are different notions. Refugee trauma is a more general term that refers to various phenomena that are connected to a specific reality – the refugee reality and everything associated to it. On the other hand, psychological trauma does not necessarily have to do with external causes (Papadopoulos 2007, 303). Yet, not every person exposed to similar experiences has the same reaction (Papadopoulos 2007).

For some, the loss of home can lead to the loss of belonging and an environment where everything is new can cause frustration (Alcock 2003). Refugee trauma can have great effects on people's lives. Some of those who have fled from conflict suffer or have suffered physical trauma but for Kalsched (1996), physical trauma 'doesn't split the psyche. An inner psychological agency ...does the splitting'. While refugees were on their journey they did not allow themselves to be influenced by what they had experienced in their countries; their only goal was to reach their final destination (Field Notes, March–April 2016). Those who experience trauma block their memories in order to cope with their daily lives, yet, when this mechanism is disrupted their trauma resurfaces (Alcock 2003). For those in Idomeni, when their destination and consequently their goal was disrupted, the memories of their experiences resurfaced (Field Notes, March–April 2016).

Act IV: Violent States

As days were passing by and people had no information on their status or situation, tension was imminent. On 10 April 2016, refugees had organised a protest. By 9 am, hundreds that became thousands gathered in the middle of Idomeni. The protests were calm and all of us who were reporting on it thought it was going to die out as it happened almost every day. After a couple of hours of peaceful protests, a refugee delegation asked to speak with the Macedonian authorities who were gathered on the other side of the border. The Greek police negotiated with the Macedonians who in turn agreed to speak to refugees. Several police officers, journalists and the five delegates went to the side of the Macedonian border. After the negotiations had no actual result, the delegation left and went to inform the thousands who were protesting behind. In the beginning, I thought that the protest was over but those who

Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

were protesting had had enough. Approximately ten minutes later, thousands started marching towards the Macedonian-built fence and the first teargas from the Macedonian side fell on the ground. The Macedonian authorities had thrown teargas inside Greek territory before due to protests by refugees, but what was to follow was unexpected.

Teargas, rubber bullets, stun-grenades and water cannons with water that seemed to have chemicals were employed non-stop and with unprecedented force. At one point, my colleague and I left in order to file our report, and when we returned the clashes continued. For approximately eight hours, the Macedonian police and military were responding to the clashes with an extraordinary display of force towards men, women and children while refugees were responding by throwing rocks. As one of the protesters said: '*This is like Palestine, Gaza.*' (Field Notes, 10 April 2016). It is interesting to note that while these events were happening, the Greek authorities did not respond despite the fact that the Macedonian authorities were clearly violating Greece's sovereignty by firing teargas and other riot control agents inside Greek territory that included the village of Idomeni.

The lengths that states go to in order to protect their borders in peaceful times became even more evident to me that day. By using a variety of riot control measures, the Macedonian authorities made it clear that their border was not going to open and anyone who tried to trespass was going to face the consequences.

Act V: Violent Isolation

A month and a half after the events of 10 April 2016, the makeshift camp at the Greek – Macedonian border was evicted by the Greek authorities and a new phase of the refugee crisis in Greece started. Before the closure, the Greek government hurriedly prepared refugee camps isolated from urban settings and in many cases in areas that were not suitable due to hazardous conditions.^[7] On 11 November 2016, my colleague and I were working on a story about the conditions of refugee camps during winter; at that time a popular narrative was the winterisation of refugee camps and the unpreparedness of the Greek government. Little did we know that a conversation that we would have that day would leave us in a state of shock; not because of the contents of the discussion – these were not dramatic, shocking or traumatic – but because of the way these stories were told and the feelings they conveyed.

We arrived at the camp of Nea Kavala in Northern Greece early in the morning, and after passing the police check we started working. That camp was one of the good ones in Greece as instead of tents it had ISO boxes that had been converted into houses. A few hours after doing a series of interviews and photographs, we decided to leave as we had all the material we needed. As we were walking out, I noticed a handmade shoe cabinet outside a house. I stood for a second and mentioned it to my colleague who went close to see it. This is when Idris came. Idris is a Kurdish Syrian who had been in Greece for a little less than a year at that time. He was with his whole family. He invited us for coffee and we sat next to a fire outside. Nawras, a young Syrian English Literature student whom we met earlier, came to help us with the translation as Idris and his family did not speak any English. After asking the same questions I did with others, I thought of asking something different, something that has now become a standard question: 'How would you describe your situation in one word?'

There was silence for a while. And then Idris said: 'I left war from Syria and I expected to see a better life. After I came here, *I saw another war; a psychological war.*' (Field Notes, 11 November 2016)

I then turned to Nawras and asked him the same question; his reply was equally emotionally charged: 'I feel *lost*. This is the first time I have been confused to such a degree. I cannot even think of what I am supposed to do in the future. Nothing. I am *literally confused*.' (Field Notes, 11 November 2016)

Although the discussion with Idris and Nawras took place at the end of 2016, the conditions in Greece have not improved. The situation is even more critical in the islands of the Aegean where there is a geographical restriction; that means that refugees who arrived in Greece after the EU-Turkey Statement are not allowed to go to the Greek mainland before a decision regarding their asylum application is made. A recent report published by Médecins Sans Frontières [Doctors without Borders] (MSF) characterised the refugees' situation in Greece as a mental health emergency to such a degree that their mental health services were overwhelmed (MSF 2017).

Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

Cathy Zimmerman, Ligia Kiss and Mazeda Hossain (2011) recognise five phases of the migratory process that are related to health considerations: pre-departure phase, travel phase, destination phase, interception phase and return phase. Although all phases are relevant to refugees in Greece, it is particularly important to note the impacts of the interception phase, which relates to refugees in detention or in refugee camps.

Immigration detention centres or refugee camps often have deleterious effects on mental or physical health and are commonly sites of human rights abuses. There are clear associations between the length of detention and the severity of mental disorders, especially for individuals with prior exposure to traumatic events, which is common among forced migrants (Zimmerman et al., 2011).

As mentioned, Greece initially set up refugee camps, both on the islands and on the mainland, in isolated areas with limited capacities and few, if any, provisions. More than a year later, problems in the camps remain. However, none of Greece's or the EU's actions regarding the refugee crisis are surprising. The deteriorating conditions of the camps can work as deterrence to refugees who plan to cross international borders in order to reach European countries. For this reason, both Greece and the EU are blatantly ignoring delays in setting up suitable refugee camps in the mainland and camps in deteriorating, inhuman and degrading conditions on the islands, as well as human rights abuses by the authorities (Council of Europe 2017; Banning-Lover 2017; Howden and Fotiadis 2017).

Final Reflections: Toward a No Borders Approach

While commenting on the militarisation of borders and the construction of the wall between the United States and Mexico, Noam Chomsky emphasised the violent nature of borders: 'The US-Mexican border, like most borders, was established by violence – and its architecture is the architecture of violence' (Chomsky 2013).

In this chapter, I looked at five examples of what I perceive as border violence. While reporting these events, I eventually came to a twofold conclusion: first, that borders are inherently violent – something that Reece Jones examines in depth in his book *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (2016); and second, that the forms of violence created by borders can be fought through a no borders politics approach – the theory of which is analytically examined by Natasha King in her book *No Borders: The Politics of Immigration Control and Resistance* (2016). Indeed, after observing the constant changing nature of the refugee crisis, I came closer to believing that Europe's reaction to the refugee crisis creates violence. In order to fight this violence a different approach to borders is needed. This different approach to borders can start with an open borders policy that will eventually lead to a no borders politics.

An open border policy does not necessarily mean the end of casualties. For instance in 2015, 300 people lost their lives at sea in September and October of that year when there was a sort of an open borders policy (MSF 2015). Thus, open borders cannot be successful without the provision of safe passage. In the event described in Act II for example, the borders were open, however, the sinking of the boat was not preventable as those on it did not have a safe option of crossing the sea border between Greece and Turkey; although there were no victims that day, the experience left its mark on everyone involved. Taking into consideration that people will continue to cross borders, for various reasons, the concept of safe passage includes the provision of safe and legal ways for people to seek asylum. One of these ways was the implementation of the EU's emergency relocation scheme which promised to safely relocate 65,000 refugees from Greece and Italy to other European countries (European Commission n.d; International Organization on Migration n.d.). The EU's relocation scheme offers safe access to asylum to thousands of refugees in Greece and Italy but it is far from perfect as, at the time of this writing, it is scheduled to discontinue without meeting its promised limit (Amnesty International 2017). Relocation was eventually a failed policy. The way it was implemented did not take into consideration people's needs and family ties as they were selected by European states and they did not have the chance to choose their destination. This, in turn, meant that some ended up in countries where they had no connections.

At the same time, the EU did not take into consideration the continuation of refugee arrivals in Greece and the shifting of the routes. Once the EU-Turkey Statement was implemented, numbers were limited remarkably but arrivals did not stop. Considering that the Statement does not allow the transfer of people from the Greek islands where refugees

Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

arrive at the mainland to await processing of their asylum application, the Greek islands overflowed, as there is very limited capacity. For example, as of November 2017, the Greek islands hosted 14,586 refugees while their capacity is currently under 8,000 (UNHCR 2017; Roberts 2017). The camps in turn are in dire conditions and those living there suffer from various abuses including refugee trauma (Human Rights Watch 2017a and 2017b). Thus, one can say that the way the EU has responded to the crisis has resulted in the continuation of violence as described in this chapter.

The failure of states and the European Union to protect refugees amounts to their failure to discontinue the violence created by borders. This is where a no borders politics comes as an answer. A no borders politics can eventually eliminate the violence created by border regimes. However, in order to achieve this goal we need to take into consideration that a no borders politics involves the refusal of both the border and the state (King 2016, 126–132). The theory of no borders politics recognises that there are several tensions involved, as those at the centre of this politics – those on the move – seek political recognition. How can one refuse the existence of the state but at the same time seek political participation and recognition? As King concludes, we can overcome these tensions through collaboration of various actors involved in the dismissal of the border.

Negotiating borders even as we aim towards their negation is always an ongoing process of overcoming – of being attentive to the presence of borders while also trying to render them redundant. A no borders politics is not just a naïve demand to bring down all borders. It's a constant, *deeply realistic* practice that undermines their logic and makes other worlds in their gaps (King 2016, 152–153).

Constantly working on issues around the refugee crisis in Europe has left me with a feeling of unease. The stories I have heard, especially the ones I never told in public, have taken their toll on me multiple times. At the same time, this period made me reflect and, to a degree, change my perceptions of the border and the state. One chapter is not enough to fully explain or even understand the concepts of violent borders and the theory of a no borders politics. However, I hope it can be a starting point of the discussion on how these two notions interconnect and how we can take them one step further in order to find new ways of approaching the notion of borders.

Notes

[1] The term 'refugee' is defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol among other legal texts and mainly refers to those fleeing conflict or adverse political situations thus the term has legal limitations. For more on this issue see this book's introduction as well as the first chapter, and for an interesting thesis on people on the move see Thomas Nail's *The Figure of the Migrant* (2015).

[2] By referring to the Greek-Macedonian border, I mean the so-called buffer zone next to the village of Idomeni, and between the railway that crossed Greece and Macedonia and the Axios (Vardar) River.

[3] 'Macedonia: Refugees Kidnap Gangs' was broadcast by the British broadcaster Channel 4 News and exposed an organised gang network of Afghans who were operating in Greece and mainly Macedonia and were kidnapping refugees who were trying to cross the Western Balkan Route (Navai 2015). The film is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5fDgJP2G30>.

[4] The route towards the Greek mainland shifted several times from 2015 until 2016. During May 2015, the most common route someone took once they arrived in Athens from the Greek islands was as follows: from Athens people took the train to Thessaloniki (identification was not necessary); once in Thessaloniki, there were two main options: either take the bus to the small town of Polycastro which is near the border, and then either take a taxi or walk to the village of Idomeni, or walk from Thessaloniki to Idomeni directly, which is approximately 79 kilometres (Field Notes, April 2015; May 2015).

[5] By referring to the open borders period, I refer to the term that was used mainly by the media in order to describe the movement of people from Greece towards Northern Europe with the tolerance of the authorities who, from the summer of 2015 until the closure of the so-called Balkan Route, managed movements in order to be done in an

Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

orderly manner. In reality, the borders were never officially open and this movement never took place in official border crossings. For example, the refugee crossing at the Greek-Macedonian border was on the area that the railroad crossed from Greece to Macedonia.

[6] For a detailed discussion on the EU-Turkey Statement see Jenny Poon, Benjamin Hulme and Dora Kostakopoulou's chapters in this book.

[7] This observation is based on various visits to several refugee camps in Northern Greece, Athens and several Greek islands between 2016 and 2017.

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Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

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Europe's Barbwire Fences: Reflections on Reporting the Refugee Crisis in Greece

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Field Notes

NB: The Field Notes are categorised in months unless there is reference to a specific event in the text.

Field Notes, January 2015.

Field Notes, April 2015.

Field Notes, May 2015.

Field Notes, 8 May 2015.

Field Notes, August 2015.

Field Notes, September 2015.

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Field Notes, October 2015.

Field Notes, November 2015.

Field Notes, December 2015.

Field Notes, February 2016.

Field Notes, March 2016.

Field Notes, 18 March 2016.

Field Notes, April 2016.

Field Notes, 10 April 2016.

Field Notes, May 2016.

Field Notes, 11 November 2016.

About the author:

Marianna Karakoulaki is E-International Relations' Articles Editor and a Director of E-IR's Editorial Board. Marianna is a Lecturer in Sociology at Anglia Ruskin University and a PhD Researcher at the University of Birmingham (part-time, thesis awaited status). Her research focuses on critical border studies and looks at border violence, forced displacement and death. In addition, Marianna is an award-winning journalist with a focus on forced displacement in the Mediterranean. She is the editor (with Laura Southgate and Jakob Steiner) of *Critical Perspectives on Migration in the 21st Century* by E-IR in 2018. Her work can be found on her website.