

Call for Papers

Humanrightization in Migration Societies: Conditions, Forms, Consequences

Conference held on 7–8 May 2026 at Justus Liebig University Giessen, organized by the research group “Human Rights Discourse in Migration Societies” (MeDiMi)

Our invitation

The research group MeDiMi welcomes proposals for presentations on legal, political, and everyday struggles concerning the human rights of migrants in today's societies.

Context

The conference is taking place at a time of political and social change. In recent years, the human rights of migrants are increasingly and systematically being called into question. Migration laws and policies are becoming ever more restrictive, and everyday discourse is frequently dominated by hostility toward migrants and the very idea of a migration society. Such reinforced exclusionary practices have led to a widespread perception that critical and rights-based perspectives are being marginalized. Actors who mobilize human rights when striving for the inclusion of migrants frequently find themselves on the defensive, trying to protect “achievements” made during a phase of expansion against regression (“human rights backlash”). We may currently be witnessing a fundamental change in a constellation that has emerged over the past 30 years, in which human rights have opened up a discursive space for challenging migration control and exclusionary practices.

The MeDiMi project

The interdisciplinary research group “Human Rights Discourse in Migration Societies” (MeDiMi) is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). We study discursive practices in migration-related conflicts: How do human rights law, semantics, images, and narratives function in the context of migration? MeDiMi focuses primarily on the practices of actors who advocate for the inclusion of migrants and, explicitly or implicitly, mobilize human rights as a normative resource: as a legal argument, a moral-political claim, or a maxim of (professional) ethics. Combining legal analysis, social-science research, and cultural studies, we develop a practice theory of human rights that is centered on the concept of humanrightization.

The conference

With this multidisciplinary conference, we aim to present and discuss our empirical and conceptual findings and to continue a dialogue with other researchers working in related fields, thus facilitating exchange across established communities and disciplinary boundaries. The conference in May 2026 concludes MeDiMi's first research period, while the renewal application for the second one (2026–2030) is pending. For the state of our theory development, see our discussion paper [here](#).

Your proposal

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 human rights references in migration-related conflicts. Contributions can come from scholars 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. We welcome original contributions, but presentations may also build on previously published research.

Contributions should explicitly address the **intersection of human rights and migration**. We are particularly interested in empirical and doctrinal case studies that analyze the conditions, forms, and consequences of **struggles for the rights of migrants**. We also welcome theoretical reflections on the role of human rights in migration societies, e.g., how the increasing and systematic contestation affects their emancipatory potential and how different actors respond to the current situation, e.g., by reaffirming human rights claims or, conversely, shifting towards other semantics of justice. Thematically, contributions may focus, among other things, on **activist practices, acts and forms of belonging, visual and other representations, individual and collective self-understandings, and changes in discourse over time**. 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 America.

Practical information

The conference will take place at Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany, from 7 May 2026 until 8 May 2026. The conference combines plenary sessions (in English) and parallel panel meetings (in English or German). Panelists are expected to attend in person.

Contributions will be grouped according to thematic, disciplinary, or language criteria. Given the limited time and space available, only a select number of proposals can be accepted. A small number of travel scholarships will be made available to researchers without mobility funding (please indicate and explain this in an additional document annexed to your application).

Please send your proposal **by 23 February 2026** to MeDiMi@recht.uni-giessen.de in a single PDF. Proposals must include an abstract of max. 250 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.