

2026 WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Abstracts of speakers (academic panel)

Keynote speaker: Boldizsár Nagy, Prof. Emeritus, CEU, Honorary Professor, ELTE Faculty of Law

Questions on the fundamentals: whom and where to protect? Reflections on the Geneva Convention and on the future

What was self-evident after the Second World War and in times of the Cold War, namely that victims of fascism and communism are the refugees, has become subject to scrutiny by today. Why does protection not extend to victims of the climate catastrophe or those living in extreme poverty? Similarly, it is undetermined, which country ought to provide the protection? Is it the task of the international community as a whole or of the neighbouring state? The look into the future investigates all these questions in the context of Hungary and the Migration and Asylum Pact.

András Léderer, Head of Advocacy, Hungarian Helsinki Committee

The Refugee and the Future of Rights: Arendt, Agamben, and the Hungarian Experience

75 years after the adoption of the 1951 Geneva Convention, the refugee remains one of the most revealing figures of modern politics. This intervention revisits Hannah Arendt's *We Refugees* (1943) and Giorgio Agamben's later reflections on the refugee to explore what refugee protection can tell us about the future of human rights.

Writing before the Convention itself, Arendt identified a tension at the heart of the modern nation-state: rights proclaimed as universal often depend in practice on membership in a political community. Inspired by Arendt, Agamben subsequently argued that the refugee is not merely an exceptional figure but a lens through which the foundations and limits of the political order become visible.

Building on these insights, the intervention draws on the Hungarian experience of the past decade to suggest that the treatment of refugees serves as a test of the universality of rights. Because non-citizens are politically vulnerable and often excluded from the community of solidarity, restrictions on their rights can be introduced with limited political cost. Yet the erosion of dignity at the margins rarely remains confined there. The gradual normalization of exceptional measures against refugees foreshadows broader challenges to rights, democratic institutions, and the rule of law.

The intervention argues that the enduring significance of the Geneva Convention lies not only in the protection it affords refugees, but also in its defence of a simple principle: human dignity is either universal, or it is ultimately contingent on who holds power and whom they are willing to protect.

Tamás Molnár, dr. habil. in public international law (ELTE Faculty of Law); Senior Legal Researcher – Project Manager, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Fundamental rights in the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum: FRA's perspective

In 2024, the EU adopted the [Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), comprising [ten new legislative instruments](#) that regulate border and asylum procedures, responsibility-sharing and solidarity, reception conditions, and return procedures. The EU Pact also strengthens the EU's planning and cycle on asylum and migration. Following a two-year preparatory period for Member States, the new rules became applicable in mid-June 2026. This reform introduces significant new obligations for Member States while also creating potential fundamental rights risks for migrants, asylum applicants, and refugees. Overall, the Pact establishes stricter migration and asylum procedures. If not implemented carefully, these measures could lead to situations such as arbitrary deprivation of liberty and unfair asylum or return procedures, exposing individuals to violations of their fundamental rights. At the same time, the Pact incorporates important safeguards; and it requires Member States to establish independent national monitoring mechanisms to oversee compliance with fundamental rights during screening and border procedures. The fundamental rights safeguards embedded across the Pact's legal instruments are intended to support rights-compliant implementation. In addition, the Pact assigns several roles to the FRA, enabling it to support Member States and EU institutions in ensuring that the new legislation is implemented in full respect of fundamental rights.

Amina Ghazouani, PhD Candidate, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political and International Studies

Mare Nero: Externalized Borders and the Racial Limits of Refugee Protection in Tunisia

The presentation interrogates the contemporary crisis of refugee protection in Tunisia by focusing on the ongoing persecution of sub-Saharan African migrants and the structural absence of meaningful international protection. In recent years, migrants and asylum seekers have been subjected to widespread violence, forced displacement to border regions, and systematic neglect, revealing a protection regime that is present in its legislative form but absent in practice.

Central to this analysis is the role of international actors such as the IOM and the UNHCR, whose limited capacity and constrained interventions have left many without access to basic assistance or legal protection. This presentation argues that such limitations cannot be understood in isolation, but must be situated within the broader framework of European migration governance. Through funding arrangements, policy pressure, and border externalization strategies led by the European Union, Tunisia has effectively been transformed into a containment zone, where mobility is restricted while accountability remains diffuse.

Engaging with the concept of Mare Nero, this presentation frames the Mediterranean not merely as a geographic space but as a racialized border regime that reproduces hierarchies of life and death. Within this configuration, Black African migrants are disproportionately exposed to violence and abandonment, echoing longer colonial histories that positioned North Africa as both a frontier and a buffer for Europe.

By foregrounding these contemporary dynamics, the presentation highlights how the current failures of refugee protection in Tunisia are not accidental, but rather the outcome of a system that externalizes responsibility while perpetuating racialized exclusion.

Lux Ágnes dr., PhD, Associate Professor; Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political and International Studies

The Refugee Convention Meets the Climate Crisis: Are Children Protected?

When the 1951 Refugee Convention was drafted, its drafters could not have anticipated many of the contemporary drivers of human mobility, including the profound impacts of climate change on migration. Nor did the Convention specifically address the unique vulnerabilities and protection needs of children on the move. Today, however, climate-induced displacement and child migration have emerged as critical global challenges, raising complex legal and policy questions. This presentation explores how existing international protection frameworks respond to the growing intersection of children's rights, climate change, and migration, and examines the ongoing debate about whether current refugee and human rights regimes are adequate to meet these evolving realities.

Nisreen Alsoudi, PhD Candidate, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political and International Studies

Performing Protection: International Refugee Frameworks, Domestic Nationality Law, and the Limits of Compliance in Jordan and Lebanon

Abstract: Jordan and Lebanon are among the most significant host states for refugee populations in the world, and both have maintained long-standing relationships with UNHCR and international refugee protection frameworks. Yet both states retain nationality laws that structurally produce statelessness among refugee-origin populations: paternal *jus sanguinis*, codified in Jordan's 1954 Nationality Law and Lebanon's 1925 Decree No. 15, means that children of stateless or non-citizen fathers cannot acquire citizenship through their mothers, regardless of birth, residence, or integration. This presentation argues that the gap between both states' engagement with international refugee protection norms and the exclusionary logic of their domestic nationality laws is not a product of institutional incoherence or legal lag. It is a structural feature of what this presentation calls performed compliance: the selective adoption of international frameworks in ways that signal legitimacy without threatening the demographic arrangements that gendered nationality law exists to protect. Drawing on the concept of demographic instrumentalization of gender, the presentation shows that both states use women's legal incapacity to transmit citizenship as a targeted population management tool, one directed specifically at Palestinian and Syrian refugee-origin populations perceived as demographic threats. The analysis demonstrates that UNHCR's frameworks and domestic nationality law operate in parallel rather than in dialogue, producing a protection gap that is politically sustained rather than administratively accidental. The presentation concludes by arguing that refugee protection frameworks that do not engage directly with host-state nationality law will remain structurally incomplete.

Adama Traoré, PhD Candidate, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political and International Studies

Applying the Geneva Conventions in the Sahel Armed Conflicts: Protection Failures and Displacement Dynamics in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

Abstract: The armed conflicts in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have produced one of the fastest-growing displacement crises in the world, raising urgent concerns about the implementation of the Geneva Conventions and the protection of displaced populations. Drawing on recent findings from UN Treaty Bodies, the UN Secretary-General, the Independent Expert, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the International Criminal Court, this presentation identifies recurring violations, including attacks on civilians, enforced disappearances, torture, sexual violence, and the obstruction of humanitarian access that directly undermine the protective framework of the Geneva Conventions and contribute to mass displacement.

The analysis highlights three cross-cutting dynamics: the erosion of state capacity and the rise of non-state armed groups; displacement generated by counterterrorism operations; and persistent gaps between legal obligations and actual protection. By comparing the three countries, the study demonstrates how structural insecurity and governance crises affect compliance with international humanitarian law and identifies avenues for strengthening protection and accountability in the Sahel.