

EU Border Externalisation in Conflict Zones: Living at and Migrating Across the Iran-Turkey Border

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Abstract : Turkey's eastern borders have been at the center of criticism by the European Commission who condemns restrictions against Kurdish civilians as the result of Turkey's military operations against terrorist organizations (namely PKK). Yet, the Commission has launched economic and political support for numerous military projects along the Iran-Turkey border to fight cross-border crime (namely "illegal" migration) along its external borders. Whilst border externalization has been extensively examined in the EU's wide neighborhood, its analysis from the ground in conflict zones is emerging. The existing analysis also rarely considers the impact of external border management beyond international migration - on the local context and its people. However, tough externalization policies at borders, where local wars are fought, are fundamental to scrutinize as they invite us to question the effects of EU's migration management on diverse communities navigating their life along external borders. To fill this research lacunae, this article examines intersections between the local military operations and international (EU-Turkey) migration management at the Turkey's border with Iran and questions their impact on the everyday struggles of people living at and migrating across the border. To do so, it applies critical feminist and military literature to border studies. Methodologically, the article draws upon ethnographic research in Van (Eastern Turkey), using participant observations and interviews with sixty participants. This article argues that the EU's externalization policies add to the violence generated by the local militarized conflict and eventually (re-)produce it in the forms of push-backs and physical violence against people who daily cross the border irregularly for their physical/economic survival. By doing so, I suggest that (inter)national fears of terrorism and migration inter-sect, materialize and affect everyday sites of diverse racialized groups living at and moving across external borders, such as international migrants (Afghans) and the local residents (Kurds) at the Turkey-Iran border. This article highlights the need to analyze the local border context in tandem with international migration management in the EU's wider neighborhood to understand how conflict and violence evolves there.

Keywords : european union border externalization, eastern turkey, migration, conflict, kurdish question

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