

Failing to Protect Bare Life During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Forced Migrants as Carriers of the Virus

Authors : Claudia Donoso

Abstract : This study compares the restriction of mobility of migrants and asylum seekers during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States and Ecuador. Based on the discourse analysis of anti-migrant rhetoric in press articles, migrant stories in the press, reports, and border control practices, the study examines the Ecuadorian government's response to the migration flow of Venezuelans and the United States enforcement practices against Latin American asylum seekers. By exploring Giorgio Agamben's concept of bare life, the article argues that this failure to protect mobility rights is due to the United States and Ecuador's views of forced migrants as bare life and carriers of the virus, justifying xenophobia, resistance to humanitarian international law, and exceptionalism. By drawing on a feminist intersectional approach, the study adds to recent research on the securitization of forced migration and challenge the race/ethnicity, immigration status, class, and nationality-based discrimination of the measures undertaken during the pandemic. The article illustrates how the treatment of forced migrants as bare life was aggravated by their intersectional inequalities. It concludes by providing recommendations that could be enforced by the US and Ecuadorian governments to protect the right to freedom of mobility.

Keywords : bare life, intersectionality, mobility rights, COVID-19, Ecuador, United States

Conference Title : ICM DHS 2023 : International Conference on Migration, Development and Human Security

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : May 04-05, 2023