HUMAN RIGHTS ACADEMY

Summer School 2025 Mardin

POLICY PROPOSAL: SECURITY AND / OR HUMAN RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS ACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL'25 PARTICIPANTS

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone and every organization that contributed to the success of **Summer School: Security and/or Human Rights 2025**, which took place in **Mardin**. This event would not have been possible without the support, dedication, and cooperation of all involved.

First and foremost, we extend our sincere thanks to the **FNF Human Rights Hub in Geneva** for their unwavering support, and for their valuable partnership and collaboration throughout this initiative. Their contributions have been critical in ensuring the success of this year's Summer School.

A special thank you goes to the **Human Rights Academy**, whose commitment and efforts made this event a reality. We are also deeply grateful to **FNF Türkiye** for their ongoing support and for being an essential part of this journey.

We would also like to extend our warmest thanks to all the participants for their dedication and engagement, and to our esteemed lecturers for sharing their valuable knowledge and expertise. In particular, we are grateful to **Prof. Çiğdem Üstün** for their insightful sessions, thoughtful moderation, and academic support. Your contributions significantly enriched the discussions and helped shape the direction of this event.

Finally, we acknowledge the energy and passion everyone brought to the table—without your enthusiasm, this initiative would not have been as meaningful or successful.

Abstract

This policy proposal paper aims to address the intricate relationship between security and human rights, drawing upon insights from the Summer School 2024 on the name of Security and/or Human Rights by Friedrich Naumann Foundation Türkiye, United Nations of High Commission of Refugees and Human Rights Academy, specifically guided by Professor Rick Lawson's expertise. The paper synthesizes key findings from various group presentations during the workshop, where participants critically examined the compatibility of current migration policies with human rights principles. By integrating scholarly articles and real-world scenarios discussed at the event, this paper proposes a comprehensive framework for enhancing migration policies to align with human rights standards while ensuring national security. The recommendations provided aim to balance the imperatives of protecting state sovereignty with the ethical obligation to uphold the dignity and rights of migrants. This paper also highlights the importance of collaborative international approaches and the need for continuous dialogue between policymakers, scholars, and civil society to create more just and humane migration policies.

Keywords: Migration policies, Human rights, National security, State sovereignty, International collaboration

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Climate, Conflict & Displacement

1.Introduction

Climate-induced displacement is one of the most rapidly expanding humanitarian and policy challenges of the twenty-first century. In 2022 alone, weather-related events displaced 32.6 million people worldwide, and under worst-case projections, climate impacts could displace up to 1.2 billion individuals by 2050. Yet climate change remains absent from the 1951 Refugee Convention, which defines who qualifies as a refugee and outlines corresponding rights and obligations. This omission has created a significant legal protection gap: those displaced by climate change are not recognised as refugees and must rely on non-binding or ad hoc mechanisms for protection.

Unlike conflict-driven displacement, climate migration is often gradual and dispersed, unfolding silently within national borders before escalating into cross-border movement. Because of its diffuse character, it rarely captures global attention or is treated as a shared responsibility.

This paper examines the fictional case of the Ashar Flood Displacement to illustrate how climate-driven movement can simultaneously raise humanitarian and security concerns. Following catastrophic flooding, some 250 000 Asharians cross into Narinia, a semi-autonomous region already hosting earlier waves of displaced persons. Rising tensions between host communities and new arrivals have led the Narinian governor to declare a regional security alert, while human rights organisations report restrictions on humanitarian access.

The analysis identifies the legitimate security concerns facing Narinia and the Asharian population, maps the human rights violations emerging from securitised responses, and proposes a multi-actor coordination framework that balances state security and human dignity. Finally, it outlines a communication strategy to reframe climate displacement as a humanitarian issue rather than a threat.

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2. Legitimate Security Concerns

The sudden arrival of a quarter million people inevitably strains resources, institutions, and social cohesion. While some concerns may be politicised, the pressures on Narinia are nonetheless real and demand coordinated management.

The most acute challenge is resource strain. Already hosting previous displacement waves, Narinia lacks adequate infrastructure to provide food, shelter, and water. Globally, the burden of climate displacement falls disproportionately on the Global South: UNHCR estimates that 83 percent of displaced people live in low- and middle-income countries already facing resource deficits.

This resource scarcity feeds social tensions. Host communities may view displaced people as competitors for scarce goods and jobs, fuelling resentment and occasional violence. A comparable pattern can be observed in Benue State, Nigeria, where desertification and irregular rainfall have driven herders south, resulting in conflict over land and water that claimed dozens of lives in 2025. Such cases demonstrate how environmental pressures can translate into security crises if left unaddressed.

Political manipulation and disinformation exacerbate these tensions. Populist actors and fringe media may exploit public anxiety for political gain, portraying migrants as criminal or alien intruders.

Public health risks also loom large. Overcrowded informal camps with limited sanitation and health care heighten the risk of epidemic outbreaks. According to the World Health Organization, countries hosting large displaced populations bear a disproportionate share of maternal and child mortality as well as epidemic-prone diseases. Health emergencies may further trigger panic and xenophobia, compounding instability.

Lastly, border and security management pose a delicate challenge. Limited screening capacity can enable trafficking and organized crime, but excessive militarisation risks forcing migrants into dangerous irregular routes. Either extreme undermines both state authority and human safety.

3. Rights Being Violated or Ignored

While Narinia faces legitimate pressures, its response has produced severe rights violations.

Reports of blocked humanitarian access constitute a grave breach of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which recognises the right to adequate food, housing, and health. Denying aid to informal camps places vulnerable groups — children, the elderly, and the sick — at risk of disease and death.
Increased border securitisation has led to profiling and arbitrary detention without due process, violating Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The absence of legal representation erodes trust and discourages reporting of abuses.

Perhaps most fundamentally, Asharians lack legal status. Because the 1951 Refugee Convention does not explicitly cover climate-induced displacement, they remain invisible under international law. This legal vacuum denies them access to education, health care, and employment, leaving them dependent on temporary aid and vulnerable to exploitation.

Restrictions on freedom of movement within Narinia further isolate displaced communities. Confining people to overcrowded camps prevents integration and prolongs dependency, contravening basic human rights principles.

4. Coordination Plan and Communication Strategy

A comprehensive response to the Ashar Flood Displacement requires multi-level coordination that combines security management with humanitarian protection.

At the international level, UNHCR and partner agencies should establish humanitarian corridors to ensure safe access to aid and press Narinia to issue temporary residence permits. Registration and identification would reduce the risks of trafficking while granting basic legal security.

At the national level, informal camps should be transitioned to formally monitored sites under UN supervision, guaranteeing minimum standards for health and sanitation while preventing arbitrary restrictions on movement. Narinia must also implement emergency health screenings to prevent disease outbreaks that could spread beyond the camps.

At the community level, local NGOs and civil society organisations should create shared spaces for education and dialogue between Asharians and Narinian residents. Such engagement reduces polarisation and builds mutual trust.

The communication strategy should prioritise humanising narratives. Governments and media must avoid securitised language such as "infiltration" or "burden." Instead, stories highlighting resilience, family, and shared struggles can cultivate empathy and reduce fear. By linking the Ashar case to the global climate crisis, public attention can be shifted from blame to collective responsibility.

5. Conclusion

The Ashar Flood Displacement reveals the intersection of climate change, security, and human rights. Sudden large-scale migration can overwhelm fragile systems and intensify social divisions, but exclusively securitised responses exacerbate rather than solve these problems.

Effective governance demands balancing legitimate security concerns with humanitarian obligations. Creating humanitarian corridors, issuing temporary protections, monitoring camps, and reframing public narratives are essential steps. Empathy-based communication and inclusive policy can transform a potential crisis into an opportunity for shared resilience and solidarity.

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Building Human-Centred Narratives

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1. Introduction

The 5th Annual Summer School of the Human Rights Academy, supported by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and UNHCR, was held in Mardin, Türkiye, and provided a platform for young professionals from over 15 nationalities to explore the evolving relationship between freedom, order, and protection in a rapidly changing world. The overarching theme — "Security and/or Human Rights: Rethinking Priorities in the Age of Uncertainty" — invited critical reflection on how fear, insecurity, and public discourse influence state responses and reshape the boundaries of human rights.

This paper focuses on one of the most pervasive issues linking security and human rights: the construction and circulation of fear narratives. These narratives, produced by media, political actors, and sometimes civil society, transform complex social phenomena — such as economic crises, institutional fragility, and migration — into simplified, personified threats. They operate as powerful political tools, legitimizing exceptional measures that frequently undermine rights and democratic accountability.
Drawing on examples from Türkiye, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and several South American countries, this paper analyses how fear narratives are constructed, circulated, and instrumentalized. It explores how such discourses distort public understanding of migration and security, and concludes with proposals to build human-centred counter-narratives that restore dignity, empathy, and rationality to public debate.

Conceptual Background

All social relationships are mediated by discourse — the shared language, representations, and frames through which societies define reality. These discourses do not merely describe events; they actively shape them. The media, political speeches, and public communications construct dominant narratives that become "common sense," shaping collective perception and normalizing certain worldviews.

As theorists like Stuart Hall emphasize, media do not simply reflect reality but rather produce it through systems of representation. They reproduce hegemonic values, reinforcing dominant power relations. Similarly, Erving Goffman's concept of interpretive frames shows how narratives guide public interpretation of events by highlighting specific aspects and obscuring others. George Lakoff further explains how such frames operate cognitively, invoking emotional responses that link security, protection, and identity in deeply symbolic ways.

When political actors and media frame migration as an "invasion" or refugees as an "economic burden," they activate emotional repertoires of fear, resentment, and insecurity. This process — known as emotional framing — legitimizes harsh policies by transforming abstract issues into visceral threats. Disinformation, which circulates rapidly through traditional and digital media, amplifies these effects by reinforcing pre-existing biases. Even after being disproven, false narratives leave a lasting psychological imprint, perpetuating fear and hostility.

Ultimately, fear narratives portray complex, systemic issues as the fault of identifiable groups — "outsiders," "others," or minorities — thereby legitimizing exceptional political responses and eroding fundamental freedoms.

3. Comparative Contexts: Four Case Studies

3.1 Türkiye: Refugees as an Economic and Security Threat

Over the past decade, Türkiye has hosted millions of displaced persons from the Middle East. Initially characterized by a rhetoric of solidarity and hospitality, public discourse has shifted amid economic hardship and political polarization. Refugees are increasingly depicted as threats to employment, social welfare, and security. Media portrayals and political campaigns have contributed to rising anti-refugee sentiment, legitimizing forced "voluntary" returns, coercive repatriation policies, and instances of intercommunal violence. The transformation from humanitarian discourse to securitization illustrates how fear narratives can reshape national identity and policy.

3.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina: Fragile Borders and Pushbacks

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, narratives of weak borders and "migrant invasion" have justified unlawful pushbacks and police violence. Fear of losing territorial control has eclipsed international protection standards, leading to the systematic expulsion of asylum seekers without due process. Reports from human rights organizations reveal widespread abuses along the Balkan route, demonstrating how securitization rhetoric translates into concrete violations on the ground.

3.3 Lebanon: Refugees as the Economic Scapegoat

Lebanon's ongoing economic collapse has created fertile ground for scapegoating refugees. Political leaders have repeatedly framed the Syrian population as the cause of inflation, unemployment, and scarcity of public services. Such narratives deflect attention from structural economic mismanagement while fostering social hostility and legitimizing restrictive measures.

3.4 South America: Migration, Crime, and Social Tension

In South America, where insecurity is often associated with internal factors such as organized crime and inequality, the arrival of Venezuelan refugees has nonetheless been reframed as a security concern. In Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina, large inflows of migrants have strained public services and sparked localized tensions. Despite government efforts to regularize and support Venezuelans, populist and sensationalist narratives continue to depict them as vectors of instability, echoing similar global patterns of fear-based framing.

- **4. Key Findings**

- Across these diverse contexts, fear narratives follow remarkably similar rhetorical and political logics. Five recurring mechanisms can be identified:

- Simplification and Personification of Blame

- Complex structural problems — economic crises, labour market pressures, or institutional weakness — are reduced to the actions of a visible "other." This simplification fuels emotional reactions and obstructs systemic solutions.

- Amplification through Emotional Framing and Disinformation

- Emotionally charged content, particularly when circulated on social media, creates a sense of immediacy and urgency that discredits rational debate. Fear spreads faster than facts, polarizing societies.

- Instrumentalization of Fear for Political Gain

- Politicians often weaponize fear to consolidate authority or mobilize electoral support. Promises of "order" and "protection" justify exceptional measures and normalize surveillance or coercion.

- Erosion of Rights and Human Security

- Securitized responses lead to pushbacks, arbitrary detention, and the criminalization of migrants. The paradox emerges: in attempting to "protect" society, states often undermine genuine security by worsening marginalization and instability.

- Winners and Losers of Fear Politics

- The immediate beneficiaries are political elites and media actors who gain influence through polarization. The long-term casualties are democratic accountability, social trust, and the very foundations of the rule of law.

- These findings demonstrate that measures promising short-term stability often corrode the conditions of lasting peace — namely inclusion, legality, and the protection of fundamental rights.

5. Strategies for Addressing the Issue

Immediate Responses

- Appealing to International Law:

Invoking binding international frameworks reinforces the normative limits of state action and reminds policymakers of their human rights obligations.

- Building Counter-Narratives:

Facts alone cannot dismantle fear; stories of integration, contribution, and solidarity must emotionally counterbalance narratives of threat.

- Strategic Alliances:

Collaboration between NGOs, journalists, communication experts, and community leaders can amplify credible voices and debunk disinformation more effectively.

- Humour and Digital Activism:

Satire and memes can expose the absurdity of alarmist discourses and engage younger audiences in human rights advocacy.

- Alternative Media:

Independent journalism can diversify perspectives, verify claims, and sustain dialogue grounded in evidence rather than hysteria.

6. Long-Term Strategies
- Transparent Migration Policies:
- Predictable and fair frameworks reduce the perception of chaos that fuels fear narratives.
- Fact-Checking and Ethical Journalism:
- Institutionalizing verification practices in media curbs misinformation before it becomes entrenched.
- Civic Education:
- Critical thinking and human rights education should be integrated into school curricula and community initiatives to build societal resilience against manipulation.
- Trusted Voices:
- Empowering local leaders, religious figures, and intellectuals to advocate for tolerance can help restore public confidence.
- Representation and Storytelling:
- Enabling migrants and refugees to share their experiences firsthand breaks stereotypes and rehumanizes public discourse.

6. Conclusion

Fear narratives transform social anxiety into hostility and crisis management into control. Across regions, their political function is the same: to simplify complexity, externalize blame, and legitimize exceptionalism. Reversing this process requires both communicative and institutional action — dismantling false narratives through human-centred storytelling and reinforcing the legal, educational, and civic structures that uphold dignity and accountability.

Ultimately, a human-centred narrative is not only an ethical imperative but a strategic necessity. Societies that prioritize empathy, inclusion, and evidence-based policymaking are inherently more stable and secure. By reclaiming public discourse from fear and restoring rights to the heart of security policy, we reaffirm that true protection begins with human dignity.

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URBAN SECURITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

Challenges to Living Together

When considering the security challenges emerging in cities due to migration, inequality, or rapid change, several interconnected issues become visible: unstable living conditions, increasing crime rates, youth criminality, economic and cultural insecurity, failing infrastructure, and xenophobic attacks. These challenges are not exceptional but rather part of the long-standing question of how to live together.

The focus of this analysis is local life, as these dynamics are tied to specific contexts and social relations—what Ash Amin (2002) terms micropublics. His research on the 2001 riots in Britain provides valuable insight into how intercultural urban life might be sustained. The question of how to live together implies difficulty in doing so. Before exploring potential solutions, it is essential to understand why coexistence fails. Amin identifies two primary threats to coexistence. The first is economic deprivation, which disrupts social integration when locals and newcomers compete for limited resources. Rising unemployment and unequal welfare distribution can generate resentment, especially when newcomers are perceived as benefiting disproportionately. The second is segregation, which results in ethnically separated neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. Amin emphasizes that segregation is not solely imposed by newcomers; locals also participate by withdrawing from mixed areas. Traditional solutions such as promoting unity or citizenship education often fail to address these local dynamics. Hence, Amin proposes focusing on micropublic spaces—the everyday sites where people negotiate difference through shared experiences.

Micropublics and the Practice of Belonging

While legal measures against discrimination are necessary, Amin argues that genuine coexistence is cultivated through daily encounters within micropublics. These spaces—cafés, schools, sports fields, and workplaces—allow habitual interactions across difference. Such contact can dissolve rigid labels and enable new perceptions of others. This gradual process, though subtle, offers a foundation for sustainable coexistence.

Doreen Massey's (1994) concept of a global sense of place complements Amin's framework by redefining place not as static territory but as a constellation of social relations. Places, viewed as meeting points, become fluid and open to transformation. This perspective undermines fears of newcomers "invading" a fixed local identity and instead encourages understanding place as a dynamic field of coexistence.

Craig Calhoun (2003) further critiques the idea of a cultural "melting pot," suggesting that belonging should not mean assimilation but recognition. Belonging, as a feeling of safety and acceptance, is not stable but continuously redefined through interaction. Therefore, intercultural urban life requires ongoing recognition and negotiation rather than uniformity.

Immigrant Youth and Claims to Full Citizenship

Immigrant youth often embody hybrid identities that challenge static ideas of nationality and belonging. Yet they are frequently stigmatized as criminal, militant, or ungrateful. Their presence questions who is entitled to belong and on what terms. Growing up within local educational systems while retaining diverse cultural backgrounds, these young people claim not only inclusion but also the right to shape the urban mosaic itself.

Amin's (2002) concept of agonistic relationships captures this tension. Coexistence does not require consensus; it requires an ability to live as "friendly enemies," engaging in dialogue even amid disagreement. Through open, critical, and continuous negotiation, such relationships prevent antagonism and support more resilient forms of belonging.

From Theory to Practice: Micropublics and the MIRAZ Charter

The theoretical insights of Amin, Massey, and Calhoun point to micropublics as vital arenas where identity and belonging are shaped. Building on these ideas, the MIRAZ Charter translates theory into action by fostering constructive interaction between youth, institutions, and police. Rather than seeking consensus, it creates conditions for dialogue, recognition, and mutual adaptation.

The Charter's name—MIRAZ: Mutual Respect, Inclusion, Responsibility, Accountability, Zero Violence—reflects its participatory foundation. It provides a framework for addressing local security challenges through democratic collaboration instead of top-down enforcement. Rooted in lived experiences, it offers a platform for diverse community members to engage collectively in shaping safer and more inclusive neighborhoods.

Bridging Human Rights and Security: The MIRAZ Charter

Balancing social cohesion with the protection of human rights requires a nuanced approach. Authoritarian or populist responses to urban insecurity often deepen division rather than resolve it. The MIRAZ Charter proposes an alternative: fostering collaboration among institutions, youth representatives, and police through a shared commitment to participation and accountability.

By positioning micropublics as the foundation of this engagement, the Charter operationalizes Amin's (2002) idea of "friendly enemies" and Massey's (2005) vision of place as relational. It provides mechanisms for sustained dialogue, participatory decision-making, and joint problem-solving—ensuring that security practices align with principles of inclusion and respect.

MIRAZ's Objectives

The MIRAZ Charter aims to prevent social unrest, marginalization, and criminalization of youth while promoting a sense of belonging and civic responsibility. Its objectives include ensuring fair, dignified, and non-discriminatory treatment of all residents; fostering collaboration between institutions, youth, and police to create community-based responses to security issues; empowering youth through leadership and skill-development programs that facilitate participation in local governance; and ensuring institutional transparency through periodic public follow-up meetings.

Through these goals, the Charter replaces authoritarian solutions with democratic engagement, turning social challenges into opportunities for dialogue and cohesion.

MIRAZ's Target Public

The Charter engages three primary actors: institutions, youth, and police. Institutional representatives bring policy perspectives and resource allocation capacity. Youth—particularly those with migration backgrounds—contribute first-hand experiences of marginalization and belonging, ensuring that decision-making processes are inclusive. Police forces participate both institutionally and individually, strengthening trust and countering stereotypes through direct involvement in community initiatives.

MIRAZ's Mechanisms

To realize its objectives, the Charter introduces several mechanisms to institutionalize collaboration and dialogue. These include co-created security policies addressing local needs; police dialogue patrols designed to enhance understanding and transparency; community events such as sports tournaments that act as informal micropublics; youth empowerment programs supporting civic leadership; and regular inter-group meetings to evaluate progress and refine strategies.

Together, these mechanisms establish a participatory governance model that views security, diversity, and belonging as interdependent dimensions of urban life.

The MIRAZ Charter: A Model for International Application

Although developed in response to local challenges, the MIRAZ Charter possesses the flexibility to inspire broader adaptation. Its participatory approach resonates across contexts where communities face the dual task of ensuring security and protecting rights. By institutionalizing dialogue and accountability, it bridges the gap between human rights frameworks and security enforcement.

Scaling the MIRAZ model to national or transnational levels would require rigorous evaluation, contextual adaptation, and sustained political will. Transparency and continuous learning are essential for maintaining legitimacy and expanding its impact. In this way, MIRAZ functions as both a practical mechanism and an experimental laboratory for rethinking the relationship between security and human rights in diverse urban societies.

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WHO ARE WE?

Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom Türkiye Office:

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, established in 1958, promotes liberal values through political education in Germany and abroad. Since 1991, FNF has been working in Türkiye with partners from civil society, academia, business, and politics. Given Türkiye's historical and strategic importance to Germany, Europe, and the transatlantic region, FNF supports liberal-minded individuals and organizations to help foster a more liberal, democratic, and prosperous society. The Foundation's office, initially in Ankara, moved to Istanbul in 2002, continuing its mission of promoting liberal values across Türkiye.

Human Rights Academy:

The Human Rights Academy was founded in 2020 to institutionalize human rights courses and form a regular structure through the cooperation of civil society and academia. A Consultative Committee composed of experts has been established. The Academy aims to fill the gaps left by undergraduate or graduate education in human rights through various activities, to advance and disseminate human rights knowledge in Turkey, and to provide human rights education to individuals working in various fields who need this training.

FNF Human Rights Hub in Geneva:

In 2023, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom established a Human Rights Hub in Geneva. As a hub for the Foundation's human rights work, it strengthens respect for and compliance with human rights and promotes the rules-based international legal order. The hub will connect human rights defenders and civil society organizations with each other and with UN organizations in Geneva.

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Impressum