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CLASH OF COMMENTS – Were the Refugees Right to Tear Down the Macedonian Border Fences?

Elliott Banks and Ciarán Morrissey discuss the tearing down of border fences by Syrian refugees

By [Ciarán Morrissey](#) and [Elliott Banks](#)

Tuesday 8 March 2016



Image: Marcin Szala

YES – Elliott Banks

Last week, the human misery of the migrant crisis once again manifested at a border crossing in the Balkans. The Macedonian government have re-introduced border controls with Greece, its southern neighbour, leaving thousands of refugees stranded.

Most of these people are fleeing the various conflict zones of the Middle East, whether it be the turmoil of the Syrian Civil War or ISIL in Iraq. They are the dispossessed, they have left all they know behind and travelled thousands of miles risking their lives to reach this point on the Macedonian border. However, now the Macedonian border is closed – only a few lucky souls are let in each day.

The reason for this, from the Macedonian perspective, is to discourage these refugees and maintain the border integrity of Macedonia. Unsurprisingly, all the tensions these people have faced have boiled over into direct action by these refugees trapped in Greece. A group attempted to charge the border fence with a makeshift battering ram to enter Macedonia illegally.

Now the hard nosed bastard in me wants to rant about not giving migrants a carte blanche to do what they like but my humanitarian side says stop and think about what these people have faced.

Many are fleeing for their lives and are genuinely unsafe in their countries of origin. If we look at the Syrian War or ISIL's hold on cities such as Mosul, the untold horror is plain to see. ISIL fighters forcing gay men to jump from roofs because of their sexuality, young women – particularly of minority communities – are sold into sexual slavery, and summary executions. Some of these people stranded in Greece, wanting to head to northern Europe, will no doubt have seen the horrors I describe above or stories which are even more harrowing.

This, coupled with weeks of travelling across this fractious region to reach the safety of Turkey and

Europe, means the frustration of these 13,000 people sitting at the Macedonian border is bound to escalate.

Unfortunately, Macedonia is merely a microcosm of a wider issue of what Europe is meant to do. Border controls are being reintroduced across central and eastern Europe, even in Germany. Once a safe haven for migrants fleeing the chaos of their homelands, they've reintroduced checks.

French authorities in Calais have cleared a large part of the jungle, leading to even more misery for this already desperate lot. Instead of a coherent response from European leaders we only have border controls, migrant camp clearance and bickering. Until Europe decides what to do, more migrants seeking sanctuary within Europe's borders will resort to the acts of desperation which we have witnessed at the Macedonian border.

NO - Ciarán Morrissey



One comment

Ann

8 Mar '16 at 7:54 pm

No!! They have no more right to barge into a country and demand they be fed, sheltered and given medical care and education than they have the right to barge into my house. Less than 39% are Syrian per the EU data. Then at least 50% of the current bunch are cowardly lazy young males who should go home and enlist in the army of their choice to end the wars in their country. (And it the women quit breeding endless kids - 4, 5- 6 or more is typical- they would be able to work and support themselves. Any 18 -40 year old woman without kids should also go join the army. Turkey's refugees camps are not great but no one is shooting at them. They can stay there or try their luck in a MUSLIM country.

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