



## SOLIDARITY WITH H5!

**Five people who provide humanitarian aid at the poland-belarus border face serious criminal charges. Up to 5 years in prison!**

**The verdict in their case may be delivered on September 2, 2025**

The humanitarian crisis connected to the expansion of the eastern migration routes at the poland-belarus border persists since 2021. Thousands of people coming from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia and many more attempting to cross the borders of Fortress Europe through Poland in search for a better life for themselves and their families were caught in a trap set by the belarusian regime. The polish government responded to these developments with the politics of violence and pushbacks as the local population and grassroots networks of organisations, individual persons and collective efforts became the only real line of delivering humanitarian aid. From the very beginning of the growing crisis, these groups faced criminalisation of their efforts to bring aid to those in need and now five of them are supposed to face the courts with serious criminal charges. In this situation, we are in dire need of international solidarity!

On the 22nd of March, 2022 the polish border guard detained four people who were involved in providing humanitarian aid at the border for a long time. Some of these people were not only involved at the poland-belarus border but also on the border with Ukraine since the full-scale invasion commenced. The detention happened as they were in the process of aiding a family of nine from Iraq and a citizen of Egypt by providing them transport a little bit away from the border. Four people were detained for 72 hours and were accused of organising an illegal border crossing effort, charges for which in accordance to polish law they could face up to 8 years in prison. One person, possessing a passport of another EU country was ordered to immediately leave the territory of Poland and were forbidden to come back for 5 years. At the same time the police performed a search of the house and it's surrounding property belonging to one of the residents of Podlasie region who also provides humanitarian aid at the poland-belarus border. In December of 2023, the public prosecutor attached this person to the case while shifting the charges to aiding those who "illegally" crossed the polish border by providing them with temporary housing.



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The charges that the Five are facing seem abstract on paper. According to the public prosecutor their "crime" is supposed to concern **delivering food and items of clothing as well as transporting people on the move "deeper into polish territory"**, by which the prosecutor means transporting them literally a few kilometers from a nearby forest to the closest town. Additionally the public prosecutor states that the Five did this for personal gain - but not their own but the gain of the people on the move. For this simple and humane act the Five are now being threatened with a sentence of up to 5 years in prison!

The story of the Five is not a standalone example of this kind of practice against the providers of humanitarian aid in Poland. At the same time as the Four, only in a different city in the region, a 20-year-old volunteer from the Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej (eng: Circle of Catholic Intelligentsia) was detained and charged with organising illegal border crossings. A year later, just before the Polish parliamentary elections, charges of leading an organised crime group organising people smuggling were heard by another woman involved in simple aid activities.

The case of the Five is part of the wider European context of the criminalisation of humanitarian aid. The situation deteriorates further as more and more European Union member states push for stricter border policies. Organisations as well as individual volunteers, people involved in saving lives of refugees in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea as well as those involved in providing humanitarian aid on the Eastern-European Migration Routes (Latvia, Lithuania, Poland) more and more often become the targets of politically motivated charges of aiding illegal immigration, are accused of being spies for foreign powers or even for being part of organised crime networks.

We are therefore sending you a call for support and solidarity!

Follow information about the upcoming trial and pass this information on, organise solidarity actions - any gesture is more than welcome. If you are interested in organising a meeting (online or offline) about the case of the Five (H5), please contact the defendants' support group: **h5support@riseup.net** or **szpila@riseup.net**.

**szpila.noblogs.org**

**#h5poland**

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