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In the Face of Authoritarianism: Contesting Power across Migration, Policing, and Crisis Politics

Wednesday 3 June 2026 15:00 (1h 30m)

The contemporary international order is witnessing a marked authoritarian turn, as states and transnational actors deploy new technologies, securitised discourses, and legal architectures to consolidate control. This panel interrogates the multifaceted rise of authoritarianism across different domains —migration, policing, and surveillance—and across different geographies, from Brazil to the Mediterranean, to reveal their inter-linked logics and sites of resistance. From fortified borders and biometric monitoring to the criminalisation of protest and the securitisation of social and political crises, authoritarian practices are increasingly justified through appeals to crisis. Yet, alongside these consolidations of power, diverse forms of resistance are emerging: migrant solidarities that challenge state boundaries, community movements contesting racialised policing, and activist networks reimagining democratic participation in the face of planetary emergency.

Bringing together scholars and scholar activists working across different disciplines, this panel explores how authoritarianism is produced, normalised, and contested in the twenty-first century. It asks how authoritarian strategies travel across policy fields and borders, and how practices of resistance—formal and informal, institutional and grassroots—reconfigure the political imagination locally and globally. By tracing these interconnections, the panel advances debates within critical international studies on power, legitimacy, and emancipation, while foregrounding the urgent need to theorise and support transnational resistances to authoritarian rule in an era of intersecting global crises.

Track Classification: International Politics of Migration, Refugees and Diaspora Working Group