



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

Peace Palace, Carnegieplein 2, 2517 KJ The Hague, Netherlands

Tel.: +31 (0)70 302 2323 Fax: +31 (0)70 364 9928

[Website](#) [X](#) [YouTube](#) [LinkedIn](#)

Press Release

Unofficial

No. 2026/20

21 July 2026

Alleged Smuggling of Migrants (Lithuania v. Belarus)

The Russian Federation files a Declaration of intervention in the proceedings under Article 63 of the Statute of the Court

THE HAGUE, 21 July 2026. The Russian Federation, invoking Article 63 of the [Statute of the Court](#), yesterday filed in the Registry of the Court a Declaration of intervention in the case concerning *Alleged Smuggling of Migrants (Lithuania v. Belarus)*.

Pursuant to Article 63 of the Statute, whenever the construction of a convention to which States other than those concerned in the case are parties is in question, each of these States has the right to intervene in the proceedings. If a State exercises this right, the construction given by the judgment of the Court will be equally binding upon it.

In availing itself of the right of intervention conferred by Article 63, the Russian Federation relies on its status as a party to the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 15 November 2000 (the “Protocol”). The Russian Federation considers that the construction of Articles 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16 and 20 of the Protocol is in question in the present case.

In accordance with Article 83 of the [Rules of Court](#), Lithuania and Belarus have been invited to furnish written observations on the Declaration of intervention.

The full text of the [Russian Federation’s Declaration of intervention](#) is available on the Court’s website.

History of the proceedings

On 19 May 2025, Lithuania filed an [Application instituting proceedings](#) against Belarus with regard to a dispute relating to alleged breaches of the Protocol, “in relation to the large-scale smuggling of irregular migrants from Belarus into Lithuania”.

According to Lithuania, Belarus has

“breached many of its obligations under the Protocol by: facilitating, supporting, and enabling the smuggling of migrants, and also failing to take necessary border measures to prevent and detect the smuggling of migrants and to ensure the security and control of documents . . . ; failing to exchange information to prevent, detect, and investigate the smuggling of migrants, strengthen cooperation with Lithuania’s border control agencies, and cooperate in the field of public information to prevent potential migrants from falling victim to organised criminalized groups . . . ; and failing to preserve and protect the rights of migrants and afford them appropriate assistance”.

Lithuania contends that

“[t]he smuggling of migrants through Belarus into Lithuania has caused serious harm to Lithuania’s sovereignty, security, and public order, as well as to the rights and interests of the smuggled migrants themselves, who have been exposed to grave abuses in trying to reach Lithuanian territory”.

By an [Order of 17 July 2025](#), the Court decided that the written pleadings should first be addressed to the question of the jurisdiction of the Court and that of the admissibility of the Application. By the same Order, it fixed 19 January 2026 and 20 July 2026 as the respective time-limits for the filing of the Memorial of Belarus and the Counter-Memorial of Lithuania. The Memorial and Counter-Memorial were filed within the time-limits thus fixed.

On 30 June 2026, Poland filed a [Declaration of intervention](#) in the proceedings under Article 63 of the [Statute of the Court](#).

On 20 July 2026, the European Union filed a Memorial in the proceedings under Article 43, paragraph 2, and Article 69, paragraph 2, of the [Rules of Court](#).

Earlier [press releases](#) relating to this case are available on the Court’s website.

Note: The Court’s press releases are prepared by its Registry for information purposes only and do not constitute official documents.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Charter in June 1945 and began its activities in April 1946. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected for a nine-year term by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States; and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.

Information Department:

Ms Monique Legerman, First Secretary of the Court, Head of Department: +31 (0)70 302 2336

Ms Joanne Moore, Information Officer: +31 (0)70 302 2337

Mr Avo Sevag Garabet, Associate Information Officer: +31 (0)70 302 2481

Email: media@icj-cij.org