ECtHR Grand Chamber hearing over Lithuania push-backs allegations

The European Court of Human Rights is holding a Grand Chamber hearing today Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 4.30 p.m. in the case of C.O.C.G. and Others v. Lithuania (application no. 17764/22). The case concerns four Cuban nationals and their repeated attempts in March and April 2022 to enter Lithuania by crossing the border with Belarus.

They eventually entered Lithuania on 13 April 2022 and were apprehended. They have since been issued with permanent residence permits. The applicants are four Cuban nationals who live in various locations in Lithuania. On several occasions between 31 March and 6 April 2022, the applicants crossed the Belarusian-Lithuanian border on foot in unauthorised locations and were apprehended by border guards on Lithuanian territory. The applicants state that each time Lithuanian border guards pushed them back, at gunpoint, into Belarusian territory, disregarding their oral requests for asylum. They submit that between the pushbacks they stayed in the forest near the border.

According to the applicants, on 7 April 2022 they crossed again into Lithuania and contacted volunteers who helped them lodge a request for interim measures (under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court) with the European Court of Human Rights. On 8 April 2022 the Court granted their request and notified the Lithuanian Government that, provided that the applicants were on Lithuanian territory, they should not be expelled from the country until 6 May 2022. The applicants were however apprehended by border guards who returned them to Belarus the following morning. The border authorities later stated that, at that time, they had been unable to verify the accuracy of the information about the interim measures ordered by the Court.

The applicants were eventually apprehended again in Lithuania by border guards on 13 April 2022 and allowed to lodge asylum proceedings.

From 15 April to 18 October 2022 they were placed at the Foreigners Registration Centres in Medininkai and Pabrad, without the right to leave the premises. On various dates between February and March 2023 the applicants were granted asylum and issued permanent residence permits.

Source(s)

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Document generated on 25-11-2026
For more information, please contact: ias@euaa.europa.eu

- Council of Europe (12 February, 2025), [ECtHR Grand Chamber hearings concerning Latvia, Lithuania and Poland], https://www.coe.int/en/web/migration-and-refugees/-/ecthr-grand-chamber-hearings-concerning-latvia-lithuania-and-poland

Date of development
12.02.2025
Country
Lithuania
Thematic area(s)
Access to procedures and non-refoulement, Access to territory
Development type
Practice

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