The Mediterranean Sea demarks a blue border, that dividing the North African Coast from the European Union. The border is a political space, separating and protecting nations and citizens – sometimes with devastating consequences. For more than a decade, this stretch of water has witnessed an increasing number of refugee and other forced migrants’ desperate attempts to reach European shores: the Mediterranean Sea also marks a humanitarian space.

The increase in the number of refugees and forced migrants trying to reach Europe has been met with a growing number of actors fulfilling different, and at times contradictory roles. The Mediterranean, then, also embodies a space of tension and paradox. Does the onus on the protection of the external border come at the expense of protecting the human rights of refugees and other forced migrants?

As the wars and persecution in Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Libya and beyond continue, so too will refugees continue to risk their lives in search of protection. This is a crucial time for the European Union, and for those of us involved in Humanitarian Action. This seminar seeks to address a range of urgent questions in relation to border control and rescue operations, examining the nexus protecting borders/protecting human rights. The event will comprise a series of plenary presentations delivered by some of the key actors in the field, followed by a panel discussion, providing opportunities for discussion and debate.

The conference is organized jointly by the Departments of International Relations and Youth and Community Studies of the University of Malta. The event is sponsored by the Network on Humanitarian Action (NOHA), of which the University of Malta is a member through the Department of International Relations and in turn, the MA in Humanitarian Action.

The language of the conference will be English. The conference is free of charge. Interested individuals are asked to send an email with their full name, the name of the organisation they represent (if any) and their official title at that organisation to joseph.m.debono@um.edu.mt in order to register. Refreshments will be provided.

Wednesday 11th May 2016 from 9am till 2pm @ The University Residence Conference Hall in Robert Mifsud Bonnici Street, Lija. This event is brought to you by NOHA, with the support of The European Commission.