

05/04/2019

"THEY DID NOT STOP BEATING UNTIL THE MAN HANDED OUT HIS PHONE AND HIS MONEY."

Date and time: April 5, 2019 10:00

Location: Zagreb, Croatia, later stops Tovarnik and Šid

Coordinates: 45.8038253 , 15.9934726

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia, Serbia

Demographics: 4 person(s), age: 20, 20, 21, 30 , from: Morocco, Algeria

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, theft of personal belongings

Police involved: First contact: Croatian police officers, 3 men and 1 woman (in civil clothes, in a white van without inscription)/ Second contact, at the police station: several men. 4 (in dark blue uniforms) of them interrogated the individuals and used physical violence/ Third contact, deportation: by 3 men (in dark blue uniforms) in 2 white vans without inscription and a motorboat

Taken to a police station?: yes

Treatment at police station or other place of detention: detention, no translator present, denial of food/water, physical violence, theft of personal belongings

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: [Re:]ports Sarajevo

ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of four men started their journey in Velika Kladusa (BiH) and crossed the border to Croatia on April 3, 2019 around at 3 am. They continued walking into Croatia during the following nights, choosing a route through mountains and forests.

In the morning of April 5, they reached the city of Zagreb (CRO) without having encountered the police. They headed to the bus station, planning to continue their journey by bus. Around 10 am, when they were walking on the pavement of a road in the city (approximate coordinates 45.8038253,15.9934726), a white van without an inscription stopped next to them. Three men and a woman, all of them in civil clothes, got off the car. They told them to stop, to kneel down on the pavement and to put their hands up in the air. The four people on the move did as they were told. Afterwards they had to get into the van.

The group was driven some ten minutes to a police station still inside the city of Zagreb. There were many policemen in dark blue uniforms at the station. Four of them interrogated the group, while they had to kneel down on the floor in their cell:

They don't let you stand upright.

When the men were asked for their origin, one of the two reporting individuals answered Morocco. A few moments later and without any additional words, one of the policemen kicked him into his right jaw. By the time of

the interview, i.e. five days after the incident, the jaw was still hurting.

The four men were told to hand over their money and phones. When one of them hesitated to do so, the policemen started to beat him with a metallic baton with a diameter of two-three centimeters. They aimed at his head and when the man protected his head with his arms, they hit his elbow so badly that the man had to go to hospital after being pushed back. They did not stop beating until the man handed out his phone and his money. In total, the policemen took 400 euros and four phones from the men. They never returned their belongings.

Later on during the interrogation, the policemen beat all the four men with the metallic baton as they didn't believe them to not have been part of a larger group and supposed that they were covering their alleged peers (according to the interviewees, there were no other group members). The four individuals were beaten once again after not answering the question from which country they had entered Croatia. By doing so, they hoped to reduce the risk of a push back. The policemen also threatened them with electric shock batons, however they did not use them.

The four men asked for asylum and to be taken to a camp in Croatia, but the policemen reacted by shouting at them:

No, you go back to Serbia! Don't come back to Croatia!

Apparently, the policemen assumed that the men had entered Croatia from Serbia.

The individuals were kept inside the police station for around one to two hours. They didn't get any water or food during that time. No pictures of them were taken and they were not told to sign any papers.

Around noon, they were taken from their cell and told to enter the backspace of another white van. The backspace did not have any windows. After an estimated four hours drive, they arrived in Tovarnik (CRO) where they had to change the van. While changing the van, they were once more beaten by policemen with batons. These batons were even longer than the ones used at the police station in Zagreb. The van which they had to board then was white as well and was driven by three policemen in dark blue uniforms.

After some ten minutes of driving from Tovarnik, they arrived to a river which the interviewees believed was the border river. There was a small motorboat which they were told to board. The policemen also went onto the boat and drove it to the other bank where they told the four men to get off and walk to Šid (SRB). It was around 4 pm by then. After walking an estimated 15 kilometers, the four men arrived to Šid at around 10 pm the following evening.

On the next day, April 6, the men took a train to Belgrade. Two of them needed health care due to the push back (one man for his elbow, another one for his knee) so they stayed in Belgrade and went to a hospital there. The other two men took a bus to the Serbian-Bosnian border and crossed the border on a bridge by foot. While crossing, they were detected by the Serbian and the Bosnian police, however they managed to escape. They then took a bus to Tuzla (BiH) and another one to Sarajevo.