

18/09/2018

## "LAY DOWN OR I SHOOT!"

**Date and time:** September 18, 2018 01:00

**Location:** Stara Cerkev, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.712329970805875 , 14.906216060098814

**Push-back from:** Slovenia

**Push-back to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 26 person(s), age: 17-60 , from: Pakistan, Iran, India

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, threatening with guns, gunshots, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 3 Slovenian officers with a van. Croatian officers dressed in sky blue border uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Yes

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group was caught on September 16, 2018, by the authorities in Slovenia, around 10 km far from the Croatian border.

The 13 individuals, including to minors and one elderly person, were walking through the forest . After several days of traveling , they were crossing a stretch of gravel parking and a Slovenian officer approached them . As it was dark, on the evening of September 16 , 2018, the group could n't see the officer very well. The respondent could anyway hear him shouting and aggressively in E nglish :

*"Lay down or I shoot!"*

The group complied and waited on the ground as the officer circled them, continuing to aim his pistol at them. Then, the officer called for backup and after some minutes a van arrived with two more officers. When the group was searched, all their belongings were taken away. Then, they had to enter the police van and were driven to a nearby police station. There, the Slovenian officers forced them to sign deportation documents which were all written in Slovenian. The individuals didn't have access to a translator and when they asked for asylum in Slovenia the officers simply ignored them.

Two minors were present, but the police coerced them into sign as adults. The individuals also gave their fingerprints and personal details. Around 6,5 hours later, they were brought with a van to the Croatian border. The Slovenian officers drove them until a concourse area of a large road crossing, between Slovenia and Croatia. There, the Croatian officers were already waiting for the men. As they arrived, they had to stay at makeshift cells made out of containers. They asked again for asylum in Croatia, but the Croatian officer simply ignored the request as well. They were dressed in sky blue border uniforms and processed the individuals by taking their

names and ages. Again when the two minors stated that they were 17, they were forced to sign papers for adults while the officers called them “ *motherfuckers* “.

They were locked in a cell all together for around ten hours. The group passed the night without food and water and at some point were forced to pay the officers to buy them food. They had to drink water from the toilet in the cell. After the confinement the 14 men were loaded into one Croatian van were and driven for 4,5 hours. They got all sick from the drive, due to the heat inside the backspace, the lack of oxygen and the cramped space.

Once the van stopped, the group was released at a rural border spot next to a river. It was past midnight on September 18 as the capture and push back had altogether taken three days. The individuals were frightened, tired and sick. The doors of the van were opened, and they faced four officers waiting for them at the border, wearing blue Croatian uniforms and black balaclavas.

*“You could just see their eyes.”*

The officers beckoned them out one by one and started to beat them. Two more officers joined from the side of the car. During the beating one officer fired his gun into the air just above the individual's heads. Once the individuals were laying on the ground, the six officers circled them and beat them heavily with their batons. One Iranian man was summoned from the van at the start of the violence. The officers gave him a plastic bag full of broken phones and as soon as he held out his hands to take it, they began to strike him heavily and shouted at him. The minors were also beaten alongside the adults and one of the 17-year-old boys lost his shoe during the assault. None of their belongings, beside the broken phones were returned. The respondent had his medical certificates, personal documents and family contacts stolen. He had a very high level of spoken English and was therefore able to request for the items back. When the officers heard him, they refused to return his belongings, but he described how they stopped hitting him because:

*“If they know someone can speak English, they don't beat that person because they [Croatian officers] can pass the information [about border violence].”*