

02/10/2018

"[...] THEY WERE TOO AFRAID THEY WOULD BE ACCUSED OF BEING SMUGGLERS IF THEY SPOKE ENGLISH"

Date and time: October 2, 2018 00:00

Location: Tenja, Croatia, southeast of Osijek near the highway 230

Coordinates: 45.516883523685514 , 18.74369275029312

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Serbia

Demographics: 26 person(s), age: all in their early mid twenties , from: India

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

Police involved: 3 officers in uniform (2 men and 1 woman), 1 man without a uniform, 1 police car

Taken to a police station?: yes

Treatment at police station or other place of detention: photos taken

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: No

Reported by: Aid Brigade Sarajevo

ORIGINAL REPORT

During the night October 2, 2018, the group of 26 men in their early and mid twenties were crossing Croatia by foot. In a forest next to highway 230, near the village of Tenja, southeast of Osijek, they were spotted by the authorities which used searchlights fixed on their car. There were two male and one female officer in uniform accompanied by a large man without a uniform.

They apprehended them in the forest next to the highway, and immediately beat them with batons until they fell on the ground. They then continued beating and kicking the individuals laying on the ground. None of them asked for asylum because they were too afraid they would be accused of being smugglers if they spoke English. After they were badly beaten, the officers searched their pockets and stole all their valuables. Each person had around €200 and a phone. The police took €5000 in total and 20 phones. The expensive phones were stolen and the others smashed. After haven taken the valuables, the officers decided to empty the entire content of their backpacks and put it into plastics bags. They then returned the empty backpacks.

When the officers were done, they took them to the police station in two vans, 13 in each. At the station, their photos were taken, but no fingerprints. They didn't know in which town the police station was because they couldn't see out of the van. When they asked for water their request was refused.

At around 5 am, the police vans drove the 26 individuals to a place near Sid (SRB) about 10 km far from the Serbian border, where they had to get off the vans. The officers yelled and forced them to go back to Serbia.

They walked back to Serbia in the dark without navigation or flashlight and without any money.

When asking for details about the push-back, they told their story without any anger towards the officers. They

were rather only confused why a person would steal and beat another person. The only hint of sadness was when they spoke of the beautiful turban fabrics they carried in their backpacks that were dumped in a plastic bag.