

08/03/2019

## **"THEY ARE TREATING US LIKE ANIMALS, THEY DON'T SEE US AS NORMAL HUMANS."**

**Date and time:** March 8, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Slavonski Brod, Croatia, the locations are all around the Croatian-Serbian border and the Serbian-Bosnian border

**Coordinates:** 45.1629298 , 18.0081565

**Push-back from:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Push-back to:** Bosnia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 35,35 , from: Algeria, Libya

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Around 10 police officers involved in different places (all male). Dark blue uniforms, different police cars in different places

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** [Re:]ports Sarajevo

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The journey of the two men started around March 7, 2019, near the city of Bosanski Brod (BIH) at the coordinates 45.1253588,18.0053567. They entered Croatia by crossing the Save river in the night around 3 am. To cross it, they used a small, abandoned boat that they found on the Bosnian bank of the river. On the Croatian side, they walked for about one hour until the city of Slavonski Brod (HRV). On their way, they saw a group of officers, but managed to stay undetected.

Around 4 am, they reached the bus station of Slavonski Brod at the coordinates 45.1629298,18.0081565. They were intending to take a bus that would take them to Zagreb. Instead, they saw a taxi with an official taxi sign on its roof. It was a gray Mercedes. They talked to the taxi driver and he offered them to take them to Zagreb for €200. While the two individuals were discussing among each other whether they would accept this offer, the taxi driver made a call. As it turned out, he called the police. Apparently he had noticed that the two of them were people on the move. The respondent mentioned that according to his knowledge, the Croatian authorities reward citizens who report people on the move to the police.

After a short time, when they were still standing in front of the taxi, the authorities arrived. It were between 8 and 10 male officers in two cars, wearing dark blue uniforms. Among those were also the ones whom the two men had seen before. They were told to enter a white Mercedes van and were driven to a nearby Croatian-Bosnian border post around the coordinates 45.1568823,18.0022095, where the Croatian officers talked to the Bosnian authorities.

Then, the Croatian officers brought them back to a police station in Slavonski Brod. The two individuals requested asylum, but the officers just started to laugh and said no. At this point of the interview, the respondent mentioned that he felt that the officers were racist against Arabic persons.

The officers took their cigarettes, money, €100 and a smaller amount of Bosnian currency and their Bosnian camp IDs.

*"They took everything that we had with us, except our phones and the part of the money that I managed to hide from them. They took even the perfume bottle that my friend had with him".*

They were never given back those belongings. When the officers took the camp IDs and the Bosnian money, they looked at it and laughed. The respondent had the impression that they were deriding these Bosnian documents.

At the police station, they were brought to a cell. The respondent mentioned that he saw the flag of the European Union at the wall of the corridor on the way to the cell. After they entered the cell, four officers came and beat them. One of them slapped the respondent in his face, and the respondent's friend was kicked in his back and legs. During the attack, the officers were talking to each other, but not to the two people on the move.

They further told the two men to fill out several papers where they for example had to write down the names of their parents. Also their fingerprints were taken and on the machine, which they used to take the fingerprints, there was also a sign with the flag of the European Union. The respondent was then told to write down his name on a paper and to hold it in front of his chest, while the officer took a photo of him. The officer explained that they were taking this information in order to register them for a camp in Croatia where their request to stay in the EU would be considered. However, as it turned out, this explanation was only to make fun of the two men.

Around 7 am, i.e. after some three hours at the police station, two officers came to their cell and took them back to the same car, the white Mercedes. After a two-hour drive, the car stopped in front of a building with EU and Croatian flags. A man wearing civil clothes stepped out of the building. He had some papers in Croatian with him and the two individuals were told to sign them inside the car. Although they don't understand Croatian, they didn't get any explanation about what the content of the papers was. They were not even given time to have a closer look at them before signing. Next to the field where he was asked to sign on one of the papers, the respondent recognized the sign of a flag resembling the flag of Croatia. Afterwards, the two officers in the car asked them:

*"Where do you want to go? To Bosnia?"*

The two of them said yes. In fact, however, they were brought to the border between Croatia and Serbia. The respondent stated that the officers obviously aimed at humiliating them by their misleading questions.

After some 15 minutes driving, the car stopped in a forest and they were told to leave the car and to go to Serbia. The two individuals replied that they didn't want to go to Serbia, but to Bosnia. The officers answered that they should just leave now, without their belongings.

So the two of them first started to walk in the direction of Serbia, but after a while decided to change their way and headed towards Bosnia, using the GPS of their phones. During the interview, the respondent couldn't recall the exact location. They had followed a railway track for a few hours, approximately 20 kilometers, when they were stopped by four officers in a car. After one of the four officers had made a phone call, the same two officers who had driven them to the Serbian border before, arrived with the same van. They told them to enter the van and drove back to the same spot in the forest where they had let them out before. They laughed at them and told

them to go back again. The respondent felt humiliated by this treatment.

*“ They are treating us like animals, they don’t see us as normal humans. They find it funny to let you walk for 20 kilometers and take you back again.”*

He further mentioned that during the several hours in the custody of the police (meanwhile it was about 1 or 2 pm and they had been arrested at 4 am), they were neither given food nor water. He said that he did not ask the police for it because he felt it would be pointless:

*“ Even if you ask them, they would not give it to you. The Croatian police behavior is cruel, I just wish that this will change. ”*

The two individuals started to walk and reached a Croatian village a few kilometers from the border. The villagers were friendly to them, a boy helped them to buy some food and to charge their phones.

Around 6 pm, some 15 hours after they had entered Croatia, the two of them crossed the border to Serbia. They walked for eight hours, around 30-40 kilometers. They saw Serbian officers on their way, but they didn't take notice of them. The two crossed a first river and then reached the Save river which marks the border between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina there. Around 2 am, they found a long bridge (most probably at the coordinates 44.9095444,19.2961859) and were able to cross. They used a walkway underneath the main lane of the bridge which they accessed through a door.

After 1,5 hours of walking in Bosnia, they found a gas station where they ate something. A man at the gas station called a taxi for them to get to the next bus station, however no taxi arrived. Therefore, they continued walking. It was raining. When they went to a market to buy some food, two locals called the police. The Bosnian police arrived by car, drove them back to the border to Serbia and told them to cross it.

So they had to enter Serbia again and walked in Serbia until they reached the same walkway underneath the Save bridge to come back to Bosnia again. This time, they walked through the forests in order to stay undetected and finally reached Tuzla (BIH). From there, they were able to take a bus to Sarajevo.

They arrived to Sarajevo seven or eight days after they had entered Croatia.