

12/09/2018

"[...] THE OFFICER AIMED A CANISTER OF PEPPER SPRAY INTO THE BACK OF THE VAN, CAUSING THE INDIVIDUALS TO CHOKE AND CRY"

Date and time: September 12, 2018 22:50

Location: near to Zagreb, Croatia

Coordinates: 45.7939494614755 , 15.980545608984357

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 10 person(s), age: 19-51 , from: Pakistan

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, threatening with guns, gunshots, destruction of personal belongings, lack of oxygen in van's backspace

Police involved: Croatian officers, one officer was dressed in a blue uniform, one estate vehicle and two police vans. Shortly after 10 officers, all dressed in blue Croatian uniforms.

Taken to a police station?: no

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: No

Reported by: Rigardu

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of ten, including one elderly male, had been traveling by foot for several days through the Croatian interior. At some woodland s near the southern suburbs of Zagreb , the y were detected by the authorities . A flashlight pointed at them through the trees. Moments later , a man began to shout at them to stop. This was followed by two loud gunshots as a handgun wa s fired just over their heads. The group sat down and waited for the officer s to reach their position . One officer was dressed in a blue uniform and continued to point the gun at them , asking :

"What are you doing here?"

The way he asked this made some individuals scared that he might shoot at them again. The respondent described how they treat them *"like animals"* and that the ten of them repeated telling the officers:

"We don't want to hurt anybody."

The officer ignored them and ten more officers arrived on the scene within 20 minutes. They came with one estate vehicle and two police vans. They were all dressed in blue Croatian uniforms and searched the individuals and took their phones, money and power banks. The group was not taken to the station but loaded into the back of the van. It was dark and the officer pushed him towards the back doors of the van, shouting:

"Get in!"

The individual replied:

"Sir the back doors are locked, I can't get in. What are you doing with me?"

In response, the officer pushed the individual stronger against the back doors and kicked him strongly in the ankle. After this the doors were opened and all ten of them had to take a seat in the back. The journey took around two hours, but after already 30 minutes the ten of them were feeling sick from the lack of space and oxygen. One man knocked on the grill that connects the drivers cabin. The respondent tried to get their attention of the officers to get some fresh air for the other individuals who were vomiting. After a few minutes, the van stopped, drawing up onto a slope at the side of the road. Then, the individuals heard the passenger door being opened and after the back doors were opened although they didn't arrive at the border yet. Instead of making them get off the van, the officer aimed a canister of pepper spray into the back of the van, causing the individuals to choke and cry. The skin of the individual sitting next to the door was burnt from the intensity of the assault. The doors were slammed again, and they continued driving towards the Bosnian border.

When they stopped again, they found themselves at a rural spot near the Glina river. The ten officers in blue and another four officers in black uniforms made a circle around the back of the van. When the doors were opened, each individual was summoned out one by one. On the ground in the middle of the circle the officers threw a plastic bag full of broken phones. As the individuals got off the back of the van, the officers asked them individually to find their own phone amongst the others in the bag.

As soon as they bent to look into the bag, the circle was closed around them and the officers beat them on the heads with black batons. They were also kicked as they tried to find their balance. Even those who didn't attempt to bend down to find their phone were beaten badly. When asked if the group had tried to claim asylum the respondent described what would happen if you made any questions about asylum:

"He (Croatian officer) starts to box you... If anyone talks, they start to beat."

After 15 minutes, the group of ten was told by the officers to go, and they pushed them towards the river and across it to Bosnian territory.