

11/03/2019

"THE WAY THE POLICE ACTED REALLY LEFT ME WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL SCARS"

Date and time: March 11, 2019 05:05

Location: Kočevje, Slovenia

Coordinates: 45.6459645 , 14.852826

Push-back from: Slovenia, Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 5 person(s), age: 32-57 , from: Morocco

Minors involved? No

Violence used: threatening with guns

Police involved: Around 10 Slovenian police officers, 1 police van

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, forced to pay fee

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: Border Violence Monitoring

ORIGINAL REPORT

The Group of five men started in Bihać (B I H) on March 4 , 2 019 , and after they crossed the Croatian border, they continued walking for eight days through Croatia towards the Slovenian border. O n March 11 , they arrived at an old bridge at the Kupa border r iver at an old bridge . After they crossed t he bridge , a group of three male and one female Slovenian officer was waiting at the other side in Slavski Laz next to a steel door and a fence. The officers asked them how many people they were and if there were more coming. Then the officers entered their police car , a Dacia Duster , and made phone calls . After 10 m inutes , they opened the steel gate and the people on the move stepped inside. The officers searched their bodies and asked them if they carried knives or weapons with them or anything else that could harm them.

Afterwards, around 5 am , they brought them with a van to the Kočevje police station. There they asked for a sylum and the officers replied:

"Y es, yes okay."

Then they put them into a room with two toilets, video cameras on the ceiling and a wall with an interrogation glass, where you can only look through form one side. They brought them food and took the ir phones . The group of five had to spen d the night in the room, probably because they couldn't push them back earlier due to a lot of snow outside.

The next day, two people with white suits, blue gloves and masks interrogated them. They asked them why they were there , where they were from and more similar questions. They only took the fingerprint of the index finger of the right hand, told them to look in the camera without asking questions and took photos of everyone. Then a n

officer in uniform , carrying weapons on his belt gave them about eight documents in Slovenian, which they had to sign without translation. They also took the ir mone y and brought them back to the interrogation room. There, one individual requested one more time for an asylum procedure and one officer replied only that it takes time.

One Iraqi minor was brought to the station and interrogated with the help of one of the five individuals. He arrived together with a social worker with red hair from an organization which takes care of minors. There was also a female officer woman (R. TROPIĆ) sitting at a desk. When one individual asked for asylum again, she just said, that it is going to happen later. She also lied to the social worker, and told her that after one night they would be sent to a camp where they would be able to apply for asylum. Also, one person asked to call his family or a lawyer, but she refused and told him, that he could call them later in the camp.

Afterwards, they brought them papers declaring a penalty fine of about €500 for illegally crossing the border. All of them signed it, because the thought it is important to have at least this one paper. Again the police officer lied to the social worker and the asylum-seekers and assured that they would be brought to the camp.

In the next morning at 10 am on March 12, after about 30 hours, the officers brought them to the van and said:

“Don’t worry, everything is going to be fine.”

When they got off the van again thou, they realized that they had been brought to the border checkpoint Petrina, where the Croatian authorities already waited for them. One individual asked a female Croatian officer, why they were at this location and that they want asylum. She was shocked by the question and asked the Slovenian officers why they brought the group to the border, but never explained it to the asylum-seekers.

“ You could tell on their faces, that they were doing something illegal.”

The Slovenian officers handed over some documents to the Croatian authorities , as well as the phones and the money. After that, the Croatian officers took some new papers out of the car , wrote the names of the five of them down and took photos , while they were told to hold the papers in front of their chest s . They also filled in a form for every individual with the questions:

“ Where are you from? How long did you walk? How many people? Where did you start?”

Then , they forced them to sign the papers, but never handed them any of those documents o ut. In the end the five individuals had to enter the van again and were driven three hours to the border crossing of Glinica. One individual had terrible open wounds on the feet from walking. In Slovenia, a doctor just put some bandages on them and told him not to walk that much. But at 3 am , they were forced to walk 15 km back t o Velika Kladuša .

“ In Slovenia I thought I finally made it, that I get a sylum and it is a secure place. I was really shocked, when you mention the name of the police station in Kočevje I am still shaking inside. Because the way the police acted really, really left me with psychological scars. Even the police officers in the white suit and the blue gloves, when they were talking to me, asked me why I choose Slovenia. I was heading there because I believed in Slovenian democracy and the very advanced legal system with human rights protection. So I wanted to establish my life with my family here in Slovenia. But I was shocked how police can zigzag the law, how they bullshit people to sign paper without translation and lie to your face, it is really shocking. How can you say no, if someone with weapons on his waist comes to you and tells you to sign this paper? I was disappointed by such lies and deception from the police. Why did they keep some documents from us?”

The respondent received three of all the documents he signed, which could be archived:

1. Document: Order of detention

It says, this person, who was detained, got an explanation in English (not the mother language) about:

- the reasons why he was detained
- that he is not obliged to give any information
- that he has the right to medical treatment
- that he has the right to have a legal representative, that he can choose by himself
- that the person understood what was communicated to him.

The individual has crossed the state border between Slovenia and Croatia in an illegal way (without permission) by passing over a hanging bridge in Slavski Laz and has in doing so avoided mandatory border control at the external border. It is because of this reason that the individual must be extradited (=pushed back) to foreign (Croatian) authorities.

2. Document:

The police has the right, to take away his identity documents (like passport, drivers license, ID-card etc.) to find out his identity. But in this case he didn't have any of these, so they couldn't do it.

3. Document:

A fine for crossing the border illegally of €500. But because he was four hours in detention, he was given a compensation of €10 per hour so the fine was reduced to €460.

These documents make the practice of the Slovenian police clear:

- There was no translation despite mentioned in the documents
- They did not tell them about their rights, not even in English
- They wrote that it was explained to the person in English, which is NOT the mother language and therefore not sufficient

→ Anyway in this specific case , the content of the signed papers wasn't expressed at all.

- They lied to the asylum-seekers and social worker about the asylum request
- They did not let them call any legal representative or family members
- They gave them compensation for four hours (to reduce the fine) but actually detained them for about 30 hours
- They kept some documents from them
- They forced them to sign documents which they weren't able to understand

- They justified the push-back with the illegal border crossing of the person
- They cooperated with the Croatian police concerning the push-back

Coordinates of Locations:

Old bridge over Kupa-River (Slovenian/Croatian border, near Slavski Laz): 45.4785, 14.9101

Kočevje police station: 45.6459645, 14.8528260

Petrina: 45.4640, 14.8528

Glinica: 45.2026040, 15.9407112