

17/12/2018

"AT THAT TIME, YOU ARE AFRAID, ALSO YOUR CHILD IS AFRAID, WOMAN IS AFRAID, SO MANY POLICE"

Date and time: December 17, 2018 15:00

Location: Lička Jesenica, Croatia, close to Lička Jesenica train station

Coordinates: 44.973666264074815 , 15.444079427539009

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 7 person(s), age: 7,9, unknown , from: Iran

Minors involved? Yes

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

Police involved: Initial capture: 2 male police officers in dark blue uniforms; during pushback: 10 police officers with black face masks, black uniforms, carrying batons

Taken to a police station?: yes

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: No

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of seven left on December 12 , 2018, from Bihać. It were three men and a family with mother father and two children , seven and nine years old. They walked for several days during which it was snowing . After five days and approximately 60 kil o meters, they couldn't move efficiently anymore because of the huge amount of snow. Also, they had begun to run out of food. T he father reported that they only had sleeping bags to keep them warm at night and it was so cold that it was hard for them to find any sleep. Faced with this, he considered calling the police to alert them of the group's location:

"I was searching about the police number, I cannot [find it] because we did not know the number, we had no internet to search the number . "

"After one hours, we move from this place and I enter a train station, slowly I go inside but three men are inside. I tell him sir can you give me food, water, and bread and he says no problem, I bring. But I think there is one man who is his boss. But he tells me no problem, you can go there and sleep. But I go there one night and sleep and next police is come"

They arrived at this train station in the afternoon around 3 pm and were told that they could sleep in a dirty building for the night. They stayed in this building the next day as well, but in the afternoon two officers approached them. One of them was perhaps 28-years-old, the other one around 50, both wore dark blue uniforms.

The father inferred that one of the men he had originally talked to had called the police. The officers told the group of seven to leave the house one by one. Outside they had their bags and belongings checked and a lot of their things were taken away:

"They checked everything. First they take the mobile. [...] Small knife, food, power banks, razors, everything they take. But I tell him sir, you can take everything just please leave me my mobile, he says no, no, after going to the other station, I give it to you."

In total, €800 were taken from them as well as three phones. They were told that they would receive it back once they were in Bosnia, but did not.

The group was put into a police van which the two officers had arrived in. Before entering the van, the father witnessed how the two officers started a fire to burn the seven sleeping bags and one small tent.

"[...] I told him "Please sir this is my sleeping bag" but he says "I don't know this language, is that Bosnian language? I don't know" and while the police is talking they were making the fire."

They were then driven to a police station with ten officers waiting in front of it. The seven of them didn't enter the building, but were questioned in front of it:

"Are you fine? Are you okay?"

One of the respondents then asked them to stop the air conditioning, which they did.

The group didn't ask for asylum but one of them brought up to one of the officers that he had a form declaring he was a Christian, however he got no response.

Approximately ten minutes later, they continued the trip in the van, followed by around seven to ten officers in two smaller police cars.

When they arrived at the border, the respondents saw his friend being taken out of the van and two lines of officers standing on each side of the van in the snow:

"[When they] open the door, I am looking outside [and there were] five police on this side and five police on this side, making the line."

The officers present during the push back wore black balaclavas, black uniforms and were carrying batons. The men of the group were taken out of the van one by one. After each, the doors were closed again and the individual would be pushed-back to the Bosnian side of the border. One of the men tried to protect himself from the anticipated beating by wrapping his head and torso in a blanket.

"Everyone going there explained to me if you get arrested by police Croatia you get hit"

Despite being a little protected, he was hit on his upper right thigh by several baton strikes, which left his leg swollen almost a week after the incident.

The father was taken out of the van after his friend, and had to cross a distance of around 300 meters before actually reaching the border while he was hit in the back with a baton:

"Also that time when they open the door, there was too much beating and pushing. And this was the time where I also asked if they had my cell phone but he say I put in your plastic bag they gave me. Also, this is when they start the torchlight saying you go this way, this way"

During his push-back, he described being taken alone and was therefore confused about what was expected of him.

"Inside the van the police... didn't explain to you what they want you to do. They open the door, slowly you are coming out and police start beating you. [For the entire walk] down to the border, the police is beating you."

He also was afraid for his children:

"In this time, I didn't think about mobile, power bank, money, only that time you can think about moving your wife and child. At that time, you are afraid, also your child is afraid, woman is afraid, so many police."

The father was handed out a plastic bag supposed to have his belongings inside by one of the officers before crossing to Bosnia:

"After I am coming inside Bosnia, open my plastic I see that my mobile, my everything is not there. I go back there but police is coming, they say "What do you want?" I tell him "Sir, please give me my mobile, my power bank, no problem, you take the money, this is yours" but he says "Go, go, go""

The women and children were taken out of the van last:

"First my friends, after I am going out, after I am back, they take my child, then they take my wife."

The children were crying when they were escorted to the border, however this action passed without the use of violence:

"The woman and children they did not touch."

The whole group walked one hour from the border to the Miral camp in Polje, outside of Velika Kladuša.