

14/12/2018

"[...] THEY THREW EVERYTHING WE NEEDED IN IT [THE FIRE], EVEN BELONGINGS FROM THE FAMILY"

Date and time: December 14, 2018 00:00

Location: Prijeboj, Croatia

Coordinates: 44.84378315601301 , 15.673747233496101

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 8 person(s), age: one 26 years old, the others unknown , from: Algeria

Minors involved? Unknown

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, destruction of personal belongings

Police involved: 6 military officers, with green, military uniforms, and rifles with scopes, 1 military van. 7 police men and 1 police woman with dark blue uniform, 4 of them with ski masks, white Mitsubishi police car, white Volkswagen police van. More police officers at police station and during push back, 1 police van, 2 other vehicles.

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?: Yes

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of eight men walked for two days before crossing the road 504 nearby Prijeboj (HR V). Along the road, there was a traffic light blinking and a building which looked like a warehouse. After they crossed this road, they kept walking for around 15 minutes until a green military van stopped behind them. Two individuals escaped. Inside the van there were six officers, wearing green military uniforms and carrying rifles with scopes, like snipers, and night vision glasses.

"They were not policemen, they were army forces."

One of the officers talked shortly with the respondent, and translated with Google Translator:

"My work is to find you and then calling the police."

This officer took photos of the 13 of them with his phone. Afterwards, the officers called the police who arrived around 40 minutes later. While some officers were looking for the two escaped individuals, the other 13 had to wait kneeling.

One of the people on the move then got punched in his face and one of the respondents was kicked with a knee on his left wrist which made him fall down. He declared not being able to stand up for around two minutes because of the pain. Eventually, the officers found one of the two escaped individuals.

Seven men and one woman in dark blue uniforms arrived with the word "Policija" written on their backs. They

came with a white Mitsubishi car and a white Volkswagen van with a blue stripe and the word "Policija" written on it. All of them carried guns and batons on their belts and four of the officers wore balaclavas, those were the ones who beat them. The woman put down her balaclava towards the end of the exchange before leaving. She was blond, with short hair, wearing a hat and was between 35 and 40 years old.

"The woman she had boy hair style."

When those officers arrived, the group was allowed to stand again. Then, the group of now 14 had to enter the van's backspace which had silver walls, two benches on both sides and a strongbox under at least one of the benches. There was place for at least six persons on both benches. There were two ventilators on the ceiling and on the floor were eight hobbles. A camera was placed in one of the corners.

Whilst the group was with the officers, a neighbor, a young man with his dog, went out of his house to see what was going on. The police told him to call them if he would see individual who escaped.

The officers frisked their bags and took some food, sleeping bags, phones, power banks, tents from some but not from all of them. Some of the individual's belongings were left more or less untouched. In total, the officers took seven power banks, six phones and €625. The respondent described being slapped by one of the officers, after saying that he wasn't a Muslim:

" They talk to us in a violent way, they were proud that they caught people who tried to cross the footpath, but for us it was upsetting to see a government acting this way."

They were then brought to a place, approximately five kilometers away, which they described as follows:

" A garage, like an old barrack. Just beside was an entrance and a police station in front of the building. The building was 25/30 meters large with a blue door. There was a yard in between the police station and the building. The road to access there was a small one. [...] Inside of it was a sink and a heater. There were no windows, but three lights on the ceiling."

When the 14 of them arrived at this location, they were told to leave their backpacks at the entrance. They hence had to stay there without sleeping bags and food. The respondent asked for his bag and for food and socks, but his claim was refused. There were regularly shifting squads at this place, and many officers passed by to look after them.

At approximately 10.30 pm, the respondent and another single man entered a van, thinking they would be brought to Zagreb. Once they left with the van, they couldn't see what was going on but could feel that the van got stuck in the snow and couldn't move any further. The van then turned around and drove back to the police station at approximately 12.30 am.

Between 9.30 and 10.30 am, the group of 14 left the place again, but this time with different officers and accompanied by two other vehicles which were each carrying eight to ten persons. There was an Iraqi family, father and mother with their two year old child and the brother of the mother, inside the van. In addition, there were five single men in the van, one Pakistani, two Iraqis, and the two respondents. It was cold inside the van because the air conditioning was turned on. The woman had her period and she and her husband tried to stop the van in order for her to use the toilet. Her husband hit the wall for a while to make them stop, which the van did, but only for one second to then continue.

" They [policemen] dropped us out in the middle of nowhere, they told us to go to Bosnia"

The respondent determined the location 45 kilometers away from Velika Kladuša (BIH) and 50 kilometers away from Bihać (HRV), in the mountains. The push-back point was in Croatia, approximately five kilometers away from the border.

“ When we went out of the van, a fire was burning, they threw everything we needed in it, even belongings from the family”.

One officer wanted to take the blanket which was wrapping the baby, but another one stopped him from doing so. They threw their hats, sleeping bags and tents into the fire.

While they were in the van, it stopped for around ten minutes and then van was going up an inclining road. When they opened the doors to make the people on the move get off, one by one, the officers asked them if they had belongings left in their bags. They frisked them again and put all things left also into the fire, for instance, sleeping bags and blankets.

All phones that had been confiscated by the officers earlier were put into a bag inside the strongbox in the vehicle and later returned unaffected.

One of the people on the move carried camping cutlery kit with him and in order to find it, an officer slapped him strongly and kicked him with his knee. A similar exchange happened to a man who had a lighter, he was punched with a closed fist and fell on the floor.

The respondent had to unroll his sleeping back on the floor and had to throw his belongings onto it. He had a tuna can and a bottle of water which one of the officers kicked away:

“ If I would have tried to take it back, he would have punched me”

Towards the end of the interview, the respondent expressed frustration and confusion towards the treatment he experienced from the Croatian officers:

“ They do whatever they want.”

In particular, it was the way how the family was treated, that stuck with him:

“ The scene which shocked me was about the family, the baby was crying, they took everything from them.”