

21/03/2019

"THE MORE EXPENSIVE PHONES ARE KEPT BY THE POLICE. THEY RETURN ONLY THE LESS VALUABLE PHONES."

Date and time: March 21, 2019 20:00

Location: Donji Vaganac, Croatia

Coordinates: 44.9071192 , 15.7327089

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 6 person(s), age: 20-30 , from: Morocco, Algeria

Minors involved? No

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

Police involved: More than 10 Croatian police officers in different locations (all men), wearing darkblue uniforms. One car and totally six vans. 1 dog.

Taken to a police station?: yes

Treatment at police station or other place of detention: denial of food/water

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: [Re:]ports Sarajevo

ORIGINAL REPORT

Around 8 pm on March 21, 2019, the group of six men crossed the border from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia by foot at the approximate coordinates 44.9086187,15.7468935 near Vikici (BiH). After some 300 meters of walking in Croatia, they heard a car approaching. The car's lights were switched off. The car stopped at some distance, then came closer and stopped again. Three police men got out of the car, pulled out their guns and told the group of six to stay where they were. They asked:

"Where do you go?"

The group replied:

"Asyle, asyle!"

The policemen answered:

"Ok asyle, walk!",

and told them to walk some 300 meters further into Croatia. At that point, a van with more police men arrived. Now the group of six was accompanied by 8 to 10 police men in dark blue uniforms and one dog. They told the individuals to empty all their pockets and to put their money and phones on the ground. Then they were told to kneel down and to hold their hands behind their heads. The police men poured the contents of the men's bags on the ground. One of the individuals had a sausage in his bag. When the dog came and started to eat the sausage, the police men started to laugh and let it happen.

After, the group of six was told one by one to go to the police car, where they then had to put their hands on the car and to spread their legs, so the police could search them. When they found another phone that one of the individuals had tried to hide, they started to beat him with a stick on his fingers, elbows and knees. The man started bleeding on his knee, his elbow and his knuckles as the photos show.

Then, they had to enter the backspace of the van. The air-conditioning was turned on and it got very cold in there. After an estimated 1,5 to 2 hours drive, the van stopped at a police station.

The group of six was told to enter a garage. Inside the garage they found dozens of other people on the move. The interviewees did not notice women or children among them.

“It smelt like in a dirty toilet. I apologize for the word choice, but there was shit, piss and garbage all over the floor. The smell was very bad. The garage was not very big, but there were so many people inside.”

While entering the garage, one of the interviewees asked the police men for some water to drink, but they just laughed at him and closed the door.

After they waited around 1,5 hours in the garage, the police came to open the door and told all people on the move to enter five big vans. In the vans, they again started the air-conditioning on a very cold level.

After an estimated two hour drive, the five vans stopped. The people were told to get off and found themselves in a mountainous area in the middle of the night. The police men handed over a bag filled with mobile phones to one of the individuals:

“Here you are.”

Standing by, they were laughing how the people – most of whom did not know each other – had to sort out which phone belonged to whom.

“They do that in order to cause an affray among the migrants and to make fun of us.”

The main interviewee said that his phone (a Huawei) was not in the bag, neither were the phones of several other individuals.

“The more expensive phones are kept by the police. They return only the less valuable phones.”

The police men then asked:

“Somebody speaks English?”

The main interviewee said yes. The police men then looked at him with faces full of hate, shouting at him:

“This is Croatia, here is Croatia!”

After, they told the group of estimated several dozens of people to stand in a line of two by two persons, and started hitting and pushing people into the line. Afterwards, seven police men without guns, led the group in line an estimated 20 minutes into the forest until they reached what was probably the border, and told them to go to Bosnia.

At first, there was no road, but later they found one and followed it. The group of six stopped in an abandoned house

and slept for a few hours. The next day, March 22, 2019, they started walking again and arrived to Bihac at around 4 pm. On the same day, they took a train to Sarajevo. The interviewees estimated the total walking distance from the place where they had been left out of the vans to Bihac to have been some 20 km.