

07/08/2018

"ALL MEMBER OF THE GROUP HAD INJURIES FROM BEATING WITH STICKS"

Date and time: August 7, 2018 11:00

Location: Croatian inner land, forest close to Skrad

Coordinates: 45.413106 , 14.801882

Push-back from:

Push-back to:

Demographics: person(s), age: , from:

Minors involved? Yes

Violence used:

Police involved: 4 policemen wearing black uniforms, and 4 policemen sky blue uniforms. They were driven in a van without windows

Taken to a police station?:

Treatment at police station or other place of detention:

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: Balkan Info Van

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of 11 males left Velika Kladuša on foot and crossed the Croatian border through the forest. They walked during the day using the cover of the forest, and waited for the night to cross exposed areas. After 10 days in a row of walking, the group ran out of food nearby Skrad (Croatia), and started to look for a supermarket. Two members of the group went out of the forest to a small market place at around 11am, where the employees welcomed them well, but did not accept payment in euros. The two men then found themselves at a nearby currency exchange but were asked for passports to change any money. A woman passing by eventually changed money on their behalf, and the 2 men went back to the supermarket to buy supplies for the group still waiting in the forest.

Just after the two men walked back into the forest to rejoin the entire group, they were intercepted by 2 policemen in uniforms and were moved to the side of the road. They were given water and searched for phones and powerbanks. The 2 policemen were driving a police van (Mercedes or Volkswagen), and were soon joined by another police car with 3 to 4 officers. 10 members of the group were then put in the police van that had space for only 6 persons, and 1 person sat in the police car.

The group of Algerians told the police their intention to not stay in Croatia but to leave to Italy as soon as possible, but had no response. Then they asked about the possibility of staying in Croatia but had no response either.

Around 12am – 1pm, the group was driven to the police station, believed to be in Rijeka. Photos were taken, and everybody was asked to sign a paper with names and date of birth. The document was in Croatian, and no translation was made available to the group of Arabic and French speakers. They were given drinking water and allowed to smoke, while their bags were being checked in a corner of the room.

Around 9-10pm, they were given back the supplies the group bought earlier in the supermarket and had this food as dinner. The 11 men were told that they will be driven to a “big-house”, therefore put into a police van. After 4 to 5 hours of driving, the van eventually stopped at another police station, where the group waited around 1 hour in the van. The group was searched again, this time describing an “aggressive search”, and were forbidden to talk. Another paper (without any translation), was given them to sign, and the men interviewed said they were forced to sign this paper by the threat of being beaten. At this moment, all the phones taken earlier were given back into one bag, all of them smashed, the battery, the SIM, the memory cards and the money taken. (see photo below)

The group of 11 men was then put in another van. In opposition to the previous vehicles used to transport them, this van had no windows and no airing. Around 3am, the van stopped at an unknown location, and the policemen took two of the Algerians out of the van. The group of policemen was composed of 4 men wearing black uniforms, and 4 men sky blue uniforms, although the 4 persons interviewed did mention that due to the night it is hard to give a precise number of people at the scene.

The 11 men were taken out of the car two by two, surrounded by the policemen. They were asked to slap each other on the face while policemen were laughing at them (around 5 times each), after that the policemen beat them in unison with batons. One of the four persons interviewed mentioned that he fell on the floor and was acting as dead in the hope of escape.

As they escaped two by two from the beating of the police, the group scattered and tried to find each other in the dark forest calling for their friends. The policemen were still following them through the forest and into a corn field. In the hurried escape, one Algerian left his bag in the cornfield and went back to collect it later. This is when he found other items abandoned by refugees, together with the same papers the Croatian police made them sign at the police station.

Around 4am, the group of 11 men were back in Bosnia. Completely disorientated, they only realised they were back in Bosnia because of the car number plates. With no money or directions they found their way back to Velika Kladuša following the landmarks of the Mosque and the Castle.

All member of the group had injuries from beating with sticks. The 4 persons interviewed had bad bruises on their back, on their arms, and their legs (see the photos below). They received first-aid from No Name Kitchen volunteers and saw MSF doctors the next day.