

27/02/2019

## **"WHY DO YOU BURN MY CLOTHES? - THE OFFICER RESPONDED: IT'S MY JOB!"**

**Date and time:** February 27, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Modrus, Croatia, on a standard road in rural countryside

**Coordinates:** 45.1 , 15.200000100000011

**Push-back from:** Croatia

**Push-back to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 13 person(s), age: over 18 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, threatening with guns, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Croatian police officers, caught by 6 local officers (dark blue uniforms with the Croatian "RH" emblem on the arm, young men between 25-30 years old, tall and strong, with a van), at the police station 30 local officers (some in the same dark blue, some more light blue uniforms), deported by some local police officers (with a van), at the border about 12-15 officers (in black, with black masks)

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Yes

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

*The group of ten crossed the border from Bosnia to Croatia somewhere near Isačić (B I H) in late February and continued walking in Croatia.*

*"We walked a lot in forests, sometimes through small villages, sometimes even we crossed high mountains."*

After six days of walking, the group's phones had run out of battery. They were somewhere in rural countryside of Croatia without having GPS. Therefore, the group decided to continue on a standard road instead of walking off-road as before. After five or six kilometers, around midnight between February 26 and 27, a police car stopped them. One of the officers told the group:

*" Stop! Stop! I will shoot if someone try to run!"*

Six of the group stopped, and four ran away, but the officers didn't shoot in their direction. There were six officers, all wearing dark blue uniforms with the Croatian "RH" emblem on the sleeves.

*" For sure they all were 120 kilogram, the Croatian police always looks like action movie stars. They were all like 25 till 30 years old and so strong and tall. "*

One of the officers told the remaining six people on the move, that they would bring them to Zagreb. The men were then searched one-by-one and their mobile phones and power banks were taken. The officers also took the group's three tents and backpacks, piled them up and set them on fire.

So the respondent asked the officer:

*" Why do you burn my clothes?"*

The officer responded:

*" It's my job!"*

The respondent then told the officer:

*" You can burn my tent, but why you burn my personal clothes?"*

Again, the officer responded:

*" This is my job!"*

Afterwards, they were driven with a van for around 30 minutes. The air conditioning for the backspace was switched on the coldest level and the six individuals were freezing.

*" We asked them several times to switch off the air condition. They didn't react, they were listening music. They didn't care."*

They arrived at a large police station in a small village . The building was two stories high and inside were about 30 officers at work. Some were wearing the same dark blue uniform, lighter blue uniforms. The group was locked in a small cell, around 12 m<sup>2</sup> , without toilet, water or heating. Before they were locked in, the officers searched them again and took their money and cigarettes. The respondent had 200 Euros and 190 HRK in his pockets.

Then, the six individuals were taken one-by-one to an office and questioned. Photos, fingerprints and personal information, i.e. name, nationality, date of birth, father's and mother's name were taken. They also had to sign the paper with their personal information, but also one paragraph written in Croatian which the respondent didn't wasn't able to understand, but didn't receive any translation.

After some hours, seven Pakistani people on the move were brought to the same cell. In total the group of six spent around 12 hours in this cell. Eventually, around 12.30 pm on February 27, an officer opened the cell, saying:

*"Come! Come! To the car!"*

All 13 people on the move got their phones and money back and had to enter a van.

As the van started driving, the police officers again switched on the air conditioning on the coldest setting. And again the people on the move asked the officers to turn it off, but received no reaction to this request.

After about two hours of driving, around 2.30 pm, they arrived to a remote spot in the forest, next to a river near the border to BiH outside Velika Kladusa. All 13 individuals were asked to get off the car. Afterwards, the van left and the group of 13 recognized around 15 officers waiting for them in the dark, wearing black balaclavas.

*"Their clothes black and I think they have heart also black."*

The officers formed a circle around the people on the move. First they took their money and phones, putting the good quality phones in their pockets and destroying the less valuable ones with their batons.

*"Then they told us: 'Take off clothes. All!'"*

They were forced to take off everything except their underwear. Although there was snow on the ground, they had to take off their shoes.

They were still encircled when the officers began to beat them and to strike their naked bodies with batons. The respondent got hit mainly on the back, one other individual's arm was broken and he had three big wounds on his head.

*"When they beat us they say ugly words in Croatian. Because this happened to me more than twenty time already I know the words. They say 'Fuck your Mother' and 'Son of a Bitch'."*

If someone tried to flee the circle, he was caught and beaten even more. The respondent didn't remember how long the violence took, but eventually they let them run away. Some individuals were able to take one piece of clothes with them, the respondent for instance was able to grab a pair of pants, however none of them had shoes.

So the group of six started walking back almost naked and barefoot six to seven kilometers back to Velika Kladuša, partly through the snow.

When they arrived, they went to see a local doctor. The doctor gave them medicine for a cold but did not want to hear their story or listen to what has happened.

*"Is the European Union sleeping?"*