

13/03/2019

"DOES THE POLICE HAVE THE RIGHT TO BEAT ME UP?"

Date and time: March 13, 2019 00:00

Location: Vrata, Croatia

Coordinates: 45.32279146317393 , 14.729168591481653

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 4 person(s), age: 28,30,21,21 , from: Morocco, Algeria

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, gunshots

Police involved: It were four Croatian officers with two cars, both white and of the size of a VW Polo, all wearing dark blue uniforms with the emblem of the Croatian flag on the upper arm, one of them had a binocular hanging around his neck.

Taken to a police station?: no

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: No

Reported by: [Re:]ports Sarajevo

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of four men left Bihać (BIH) on March 8, 2019, around 5 pm. After four to five hours, they crossed the border and entered Croatia. The group continued walking for four days through rural areas, forests, hills, mountains. They even saw a bear with a cub. The group was equipped with a tent and sleeping bags. On the fourth day, they had to cross a main street to enter another forest. It was in the region before Vrata (HRV), where the authorities awaited them. It were four officers with two cars, both white and of the size of a VW Polo, all wearing dark blue uniforms with the emblem of the Croatian flag on the upper arm, one of them had a binocular hanging around his neck. The respondent supposed, that they might have been tracked with night vision binoculars as it seemed as if the officers already expected the people on the move stepping out of the forest at exactly this spot.

„ Maybe this street is generally under surveillance . ”

It was around midnight when they got caught.

„ The police men screamed ‘ Stop! Stop! ’ and shot two times in the air.“

The group of four stopped and were ordered to wait. The only thing the officers asked, was how many they were in total. After around ten minutes, a big white van arrived. Before they had to enter the van, they were frisked but nothing was taken from them. The driver's space and the backspace of the van was separated by a little window which was also the only window for the backspace. The driver and one other officer were sitting in the front of the van. When they started driving, they also switched on the air conditioning on a very cold level. It cooled down the van during the whole three-hour drive. The group repeatedly knocked on the window to ask the officers to turn off the air condition, but they didn't react.

„ Stop klima [air condition]! Stop klima! We shouted many, many times , but they did not switch it off.“

Around 4 am, the Croatian police van arrived approximately 300 meters away from the first houses of the city of Velika Kladuša (BIH), where some more officers were waiting for them. When the door of the van was opened, they shouted:

„ Hayde, hayde one by one come out!“

The respondent was the first one to get off the van. Like an escort, officers were standing to both sides. Three of them punched the interviewee quite hard on the left side and his back and beat him with batons. When he tried to escape the attack, the fourth officer ran after him and punched him with his fist in the face, so one glass of his glasses broke. His friends got off the van after him. All of them tried to run as fast as they could, but couldn't escape the beating. The last member of the group got badly punched on the back (see photo). The whole time the officers were shouting:

„ Go Bosnia! Hayde! Hayde!“

According to the respondent, the officers insulted them using Croatian expletives, laughing extremely loud at them and trying to harass them. He also recalled their appearance. One was around 45 years old, the second a heavy set man and the others were around 30 years old, tall and strong.

After some meters of running, the group reached a very small river, crossed it and walked to the IOM Camp Miral outside Velika Kladuša.

In the end the respondent asked the person conducting the interview:

“Does the police have the right to beat me up?”

He explained, that this violence by Croatian officers happens so frequently, that it somehow became normal.