

25/03/2019

## **"THEY OBVIOUSLY WERE TRYING TO BE NOT SEEN, BECAUSE THEY KNEW THAT THEY DO SOMETHING ILLEGAL."**

**Date and time:** March 25, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Korenica, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 44.74307158239444 , 15.706314759596694

**Push-back from:** Slovenia

**Push-back to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 24-37 , from: Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, pepper spray, electric shock, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 12 Croatian police officers, some had bald head, one officer with a light beard had a steel chain

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, papers signed, no translator present, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The group of eight people on the move started in Izačić (BIH) around March 15, 2019. On March 22, 2019, they arrived at an old bridge which crosses the Kupa river, marking the Slovenian/ Croatian border. They were all hopeful, as they thought all would be fine, once they reached Slovenia. When they saw a steel fence with an open door on the Slovenian side and no police, they walked through. But just 600 meters further, they ran into five police cars with 10-12 police officers, seeming to already be waiting for them.

They were caught by the Slovenian police and taken in a van to the police station of the city Črnomelj where they were detained for two days.

A Palestinian translator (who said he hates Muslims) was present, they already had heard of prior their move from Izačić, from people in Velika Kladuša. It was mentioned, that this translator came to work in Slovenia, after he apparently had some problems in Israel. People advised to best avoid this translator in Črnomelj, who e.g. says he hates Muslims. In the process he was only there to identify nationalities of detained individuals, based to the language they spoke. He didn't help them translating any of the documents thou and the eight of them had to sign four documents without any translation. One of the papers was a fine of around 500 Euros for crossing the border illegally. They also took only one fingerprint from the right thumb of the interviewee. The group was denied access to asylum procedure.

One individual from Syria was brought to the camp in Ljubljana, the others had to enter a van. They brought them to a border crossing point at the Slovenian-Croatian border, where the Croatian police was already waiting for them. One person saw, that one Slovenian police officer gave all the documents to the Croatian police, and they destroyed them

immediately. As a consequence, none of the people on the move got a copy of the papers.

The Croatian police brought the group of now seven individuals to “the Garage” in Korenica, where they took basically all belongings from them.

*“There was only dirty concrete floor, no toilets, blankets or sponge. We were lying on the cold ground, we were freezing.”*

They destroyed their phones with batons, including the chargers. They stole all of their money, their power banks, even cigarettes and food and the glasses of one individual.

The police then made them strip naked and eight to ten police officers started beating and kicking them with their hands, elbows and feet. They further used electric-shockers and a lot of pepper spray. All individuals were crying.

The police seemed concerned that someone would see their outrage, looking over their shoulders several times to make sure, that nobody is watching through the windows on the one side of the garage.

*“They obviously were trying to be not seen, because they knew that they do something illegal.”*

When the police was done with their physical misuse, they drove them, naked as they were, in a car to an unknown river at the Croatian/ Bosnian border about 24 km from Velika Kladuša. During the whole trip, they turned down the air-conditioning of the inside of the van, which made them suffer and freeze.

Once they got off the van again, around 12 tall police officers, some with bald heads, some with balaclavas, were waiting in the rain with batons and sticks to beat them up all over again. One police officer was also using an about 1,5 m long steel chain, to beat one individual badly on the head. The individual was bleeding seriously, but somehow still managed to run away.

The police officers finally threw their clothes after the individuals in the rain-slicked grass and forced them to walk through the river to the Bosnian side. From there, they had to walk all the way back to Velika Kladuša.

[Opinion of the interviewee:

The interviewee says that the Croatian police is lying to the European Union when they say they don't beat people, or they don't steal anything. They do illegal push-backs all the time, hurting and humiliating people. Also, some Slovenian police officers cooperate with the Croatian police, to zigzag the law and make illegal push-backs possible.]

**Coordinates of the different locations:**

Old Bridge over Kupa-River : 45.4785, 14.9101

Črnomelj: 45.5761, 15.1900

“The Garage” next to the police station Korenica: 44.7431701, 15.7062677