

23/11/2018

" IN THIS MOMENT, YOU START TO FEEL THAT YOU ARE NOT EVEN HUMAN"

Date and time: November 23, 2018 23:00

Location: Bosnian-Croatian border area close to Maljevac, Croatia

Coordinates: 45.186309 , 15.781281

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 3 person(s), age: 20-45 , from: Syria

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

Police involved: 7 officers wearing ski masks in two cars

Taken to a police station?: unknown

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: No

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

On the night of November 23, 2018, the group of three started walking from an area close to the official border checkpoint between Maljevac (HRV) and Velika Kladuša (BIH) with the intention of passing through Croatia and continuing till Slovenia. The three of them had walked approximately 6 or 7 kilometers into Croatia when they entered an open field lined with trees.

They were hiding underneath several of the sparsely placed trees as several Croatian officers drove a car close to their position, got off, and appeared to be looking for someone. After some minutes, the officers talked via their radio device with somebody and then began to approach the group's position more precisely. The respondent inferred that there was another team of officers placed elsewhere, observing the field from afar with the assistance of technology. Shortly thereafter, the five of them were spotted by the officers, approached, and taken out of their hiding place. One of the individuals was taken by the officers, beaten and slapped in the face.

They took their phones and searched through their bags for any other valuables.

"First, they asked about phones, knives, anything sharp, next they beat. Power banks stolen, cables too."

The respondent had two phones on him and gave the police one of them which he had been using for GPS, but kept the second, smaller phone hidden in his bag. The second phone had a special meaning to him, and he was afraid the officers would break it. Also the rest of the group handed over their phones to the officers. When the officers discovered the respondent's second hidden phone, one of the officers stood up, walked over to him, and gave him a single kick with his army boot directly into the eye socket (see photo). After that, the officer began to punch him with closed fists on different parts of the body, which left the respondent with breathing difficulties.

While at first there was only one police car present, later two more joined, and in total, six officers were present.

The officers arrived in at least one large van, which was the same van that would carry the group of five back to the border. One of the other cars was equipped with a large spotlight.

The group was then loaded into the waiting van and brought them to a secluded area of the Bosnian-Croatian border outside of Velika Kladuša (BIH). On the way, the driver sped up the van rapidly and then made an emergency break which forced the five individuals in backspace to slam against the sides of the van. The respondent blacked out for a moment after hitting his head on the van and had a visible mark on the back of his ear, which he attributes to the incident. After the drive, they had to get off the van one by one and were beaten by five Croatian officers.

“ One brings you from the car, the other stays inside the car, and four officers start beating [us] and the final one, in front of a valley, and down is Bosnia and he catch him, start giving him some kicks and pushes him so he falls down.”

One of the officers held the men by their arms, while another held them closer to the neck. Then they walked them to the border and started to kick them, to hit them with batons and closed fists. They were each hit for around ten minutes in the ribs, knees, the back of the head, and the face.

“ You try to escape and you find four persons already behind you and find the final one at the line of the border. He is just waiting, the last kiss.”

During the interview, a person in the background led out a high-pitched scream in response to the previous statement. The respondent commented on that:

“ There was screaming even more higher than this. No mercy. You can't even breathe... You can't breathe. Just screaming. High screaming, that's it.”

When the respondent tried to avoid the hits, they kicked the back of his knees, so he would fall down, asked him if he was trying to escape and then hit him even harder.

“ The worst is that they are insulting us, they start laughing and make jokes when they are starting to beat us. In this moment, you start to feel that you are not even human. You just try to escape, just to run and go and then they make you fall down again and start beating you. And this is the worst part, you just want to survive and they make you fall down and start laughing and start beating more and more.”

The respondent was the last to leave the van and described the rest of his group waiting for him somewhere after the border.

The five of them were exhausted but walked back the 5 km to the Trnovi camp in Velika Kladuša and fell asleep.

The respondent had superficial bruises on his body and ear due to the beatings and the sudden breaking of the van. In addition, his eye was swollen, bruised, and scabbed over as a result of the kick in the face from the officer.