

11/10/2018

"SOME STARTED VOMITING INSIDE AND CHILDREN STARTED CRYING. IT WAS REALLY AWFUL, HARDER THAN THE BEATING"

Date and time: October 11, 2018 01:00

Location: near Gornji Furjan, Croatia

Coordinates: 45.04581745850764 , 15.681776951342727

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 17 person(s), age: two children 9-13 years old from one family, others unknown , from: Palestine, Syria, Iraq

Minors involved? Yes

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, pouring water over one's head, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving, lack of oxygen in van's backspace

Police involved: First three officers in a car. In addition nine Croatian officers with batons and one female one about 1.95m tall, boss: around 40 years old and corpulent; license plate of car which drove them back to Bosnian border: HR (CROATIAN FLAG) ZG 156

Taken to a police station?: unknown

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: No

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

In the morning, a 36-year-old man came close to the informal camp in Velika Kladusa (BIH) where "No Name Kitchen" provides showers. He could barely walk and looked disoriented and tired. He sat down on a chair and explained that he had been brutally attacked by the Croatian authorities at the Bosnian border the previous night, where he was pushed-back together with 16 individuals:

"The y mad e a half circle in front of the car, called people out of the car one by one in order to beat them. There were children and woman. They also beat the woman because she tried to hide her phone under her clothes and they found out, so they hit her by a baton. Her children and we could see it. Children were crying. But the police did not care. They kept telling me: ' Fuck you, fuck your mother ' and after shouting at us, 'You go back to Bosnia. ' It was horrible, they were deporting us around 3 am and for three or four hours after, we were searching for each other in a forest. They were beating also an old man who was there with us and now has a broken finger. ... Do you have a cigarette? I have money [pulling ten marks out of his pocket] but I cannot go to the supermarket because I feel so dizzy and tired. I keep vomiting blood. I can't eat anything as I vomit it out. I think I may have maybe internal bleeding from so many kicks into my body."

Later in the afternoon, another four individuals who had been pushed-back together with this man arrived. One of them, a 35-year-old individual who could speak fluent English, explained to me what happened to him and his friends the previous night at the Croatian-Bosnian border. He had started walking together with 16 people on the move, including one family with three children, in Sturlic (BIH) and crossed the border to Croatia, with the intention to apply for asylum in the EU. He explained that all of them have difficult situations in their homelands,

escaping war and violent governments, and for this reason they have searching for safety in Europe.

“ We have very bad situations in our countries. Especially in my case, I have a brother in prison in Palestine because of political reasons. My mother, they shot her on the way home in Syria. I have no way to go, only to Europe. His [friend] family is for three years lives in Austria. He tries to go with them, he’s 64 and was kidnapped in Iraq. This other guy’s family is in England, same case. We don’t need European money, we need European safety.”

He then told that, when they were crossing a Croatian forest road around 1 am, they could hear voices of officers and could see their flashlights in the dark. Soon after, a police car with three officers arrived at the road where they were walking:

“ The car was driving so fast that they almost crashed the family with kids who were on the road. We [the men] were hiding at first, but we came out because we did not want to cause any problem and did not want to leave the family there.”

A few minutes later, another three police cars arrived with ten more officers wearing dark blue uniforms. One of the individuals could remember the registration number of one of the cars: HR (CROATIAN FLAG) ZG 156. The officers told the group of 17 to put their bags in front of them and removed their phones. A woman, mother of three children, told the officers that she didn’t have a phone, but when they frisked her body, they found one hidden under her clothes. When the officers discovered this hidden phone, they attacked her with a baton in front of her crying children.

“ It was very hard for us because we saw a woman being beaten by the Croatian police and we couldn’t do anything. They beat her so much with baton.”

The officers didn’t ask any questions and directly drove them to the Bosnian border with a small van. The 17 were cramped inside and therefore the backspace was lacking oxygen which caused breathing difficulties.

“ They put all of us in the car. We are 17 persons with the children, they put us into very small car, van, into a boot. They were driving very fast, like on purpose. Some started vomiting inside and children started crying. It was really awful, harder than the beating.”

After a 30-minute drive, the car stopped at the Bosnian border. The officers opened the van and told all individuals to get off, either individually or in pairs. Then, they attacked them with batons and kicks while pushing them back to Bosnia, including the 64-year-old man:

“ One man was still vomiting, and they saw him vomiting and they started beating him. They hit his arm. They then told me to come out of the car and they asked me: ‘ Where are you from? ’, and I said to them: ‘ I am from Syria. ’ He answered: # What is the matter with Syria?! ’ and started beating, beating, beating. After he told me: ‘ Go! ’. O K, so when I started walking I had passed all of them, nine police men, while they were all attacking me by batons.”

„ They threw water on me and after, they beat us with sticks [batons]. They put my shoes on my chest and head and said very hard words to me. I fell, and they kept beating me although I was on the ground. I was rolling, and they kept beating me.”

All were trying to run away, but in that remote forest location in the dark night, they struggled to find the way out. They also had lost their bags when they were trying to escape so as soon as they could hear the officers driving away, they returned to search for each other and for their bags. They found many broken phones and

cut chargers on the way from previous push-backs of other people on the move at the same spot. On their way back, they could also hear screams of other people on the move from far away who were also being pushed-back in the same night and attacked by the officers.

“When we found each other they [police] brought other persons to the same point and we could hear their voices. We could hear screaming like a hell. We were very afraid because we could hear lots of crying from far away. The kids were very afraid. We could hear lots of crying noises.”