

15/01/2019

"WHEN I SEE MY FRIEND, I THINK HE WILL DIE"

Date and time: January 15, 2019 00:00

Location: Kozina, Slovenia, forest near Kozina, 2,5km away from the Italian border

Coordinates: 45.60756566680113 , 13.890589636157188

Push-back from: Slovenia

Push-back to: Croatia, Bosnia

Demographics: 5 person(s), age: 30-50 , from: Tunisia

Minors involved?: No

Violence used: forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

Police involved: 4-5 Slovenian police men and 1 woman with green military fatigues and long rifles, 1 police van before and at police station, also 2 military officers and 1 police officer with black uniform at police station, later Croatian male and 1 female police officers; 2 police men with black uniform, 2 police van

Taken to a police station?: yes

Treatment at police station or other place of detention: detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of five left Velika Kladuša (BIH) and walked all the way through Croatia until Slovenia. Eventually, they were caught by Slovenian authorities, while walking along a small path in a Slovenian forest during the evening. They were approximately 1,5 kilometers away from the Italian border. The group of around five officers fired in the air, at least three times and the five individuals stopped at a distance of twenty meters. The officers wore green military clothes and carried long rifles. One of them was female.

The group of five was soon brought to a police van parked approximately 700 meters away from the spot where they were apprehended. After this, they were driven for 30 minutes to a police station at the Slovenian–Croatian border.

When they arrived at the police station:

"They [policemen] took our names, where do you go, removed our clothes, jacket, shoes, all, all even underwear, in the office of the police station."

"We stay in the line, outside. Take our clothes and look pockets, money [...] we stood in line and spoke for each person and one by one, took our clothes. I saw a policewoman here."

According to the respondent, the policewoman remained in the office. They were forced to undress completely. Later, they were made to sign a paper requesting €240, even though the officers had previously taken all the money from them.

"After they bring me to closed room, empty room , and we told him [to a policeman] we need some food because two days,

no eat, and then they bring me biscuits, water and chocolate.”

Two hours later, a translator arrived. The seven are not sure where he was originally from, but suppose he might have been Lebanese or Palestinian. He spoke only to one of the individuals and interrogated him like a police officer. According to the respondent, he conducted the interview without waiting for a question from the officers.

“He did an interrogatory without the police in Arabic and then report whatever he wanted to the police.”

At the police station, two military officers were present, but didn't speak or interact with the people on the move. Apparently, they were just observing. Additionally, one officer wearing a black uniform was there with the translator.

The second respondent expressed confusion with the way the translator interacted with them:

“I think he should ask everyone the same question, but he asked only our friend. [...] My friend was coming after 1 . 30 am, we thought they will ask us the same as my friend, ask me and my friends , but they didn't ask.”

The translator was described as an elderly man, about 68 years old, brown eyes, about 65 kg, 1,65 m and with gray hair. He wore glasses and had a strict demeanor. The respondent tried to remember the translators name and expressed that it was a name similar to “ *Ismael/Saleh Majid* ”. The respondent explained that he only saw the translators name briefly as he showed his business card to an officer at the station.

After the translator finished his interview, the officers took the group of seven to another office to take fingerprints of their ten fingers.

During the night, one officer came to tell them that they would leave to Croatia the next morning. Accordingly, they were brought to a checkpoint at the Croatian border at 10 am the following day. They didn't stay on the Slovenian side for long and were directly brought to the Croatian side.

“Croatian p olice caught me the same way as an animal.”

They had to undress completely again at the Croatian border station.

“After removing my clothes, all, all, all coming down.”

“They drop me in the street, but there was a space [inside], they frisked us and removed my clothes. I told him “it's really cold”, he [the policeman] told me “you have money, you have money” because I gave him my money, but he said, “you have more””

At this location, a Croatian female officer took a photo of each of them. The group stayed approximately seven hours at the border checkpoint on the Croatian side before being transported to the Bosnian border in a van.

“After the bus arrived, they put me in the bus and my friend became sick inside. They opened the climatization on inside the bus. When I see my friend, I think he will die. His finger became hard, he had problem in his stomach and his saliva was going outside. That's why I punched the door “please, please, please, we need ambulance, my friend will die, he needs to go to hospital”

Nobody answered his call, supposedly because they either didn't hear or didn't believe him. The respondent thought that his friend had collapsed due to the stress of the situation:

“First, he was afraid, after that, it was really cold. I punched the door, “please we need a hot place”, but nobody cares.”

“We were too afraid that they would beat us.”

Eventually, they arrived at the official checkpoint near Velika Kladuša (BIH). The respondent inferred that perhaps they were brought to the official checkpoint since they had more apprehended individuals to pick up. They were transferred to a police van with three officers in the front, i.e. the driver and two officers were wearing black uniforms. A second van drove with them for half an hour to another place along the border. When they arrived, the officers opened the doors and asked them to leave. Four of the individuals carried their friend out of the van because he still felt bad. They waited until he had recovered and then walked back to Velika Kladuša.