

08/04/2019

"GO TO MUSLIM PLACES LIKE BOSNIA OR ABU DHABI."

Date and time: April 8, 2019 10:00

Location: Sredisce ob Dravi, Slovenia

Coordinates: 46.3891853 , 16.2765728

Push-back from: Slovenia

Push-back to: Croatia, Bosnia

Demographics: 2 person(s), age: 23, 24 , from: Algeria

Minors involved? No

Violence used: no violence used

Police involved: At first 2 Slovenian officers, dressed in uniform, in an unofficial car. Later joined by 2 police cars with 4 more officers, one of them Croatian. More officers at the Slovenian and Croatian police stations and on transports in Croatia. 2 police vans in Slovenia and 1 police van in Croatia.

Taken to a police station?: yes

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

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: [Re:]ports Sarajevo

ORIGINAL REPORT

The two Algerians, a 24-year-old woman and a 23-year-old man started their journey on Thursday, April 4, 2019. They crossed the border to Croatia by foot west of Livno (BiH). After two nights of walking, they reached Sinj (CRO) from where they continued by bus to Split and Zagreb. Both of them stayed one night in Zagreb and took a bus to Varazdin (CRO) on the evening of April 7. They left Varazdin in the same night by foot, crossed the border to Slovenia and arrived in Sredisce ob Dravi (SLN) the next morning on April 8.

They were waiting at the train station of Sredisce to take a train to Ljubljana. Around 10 am, an unofficial brown-beige car drove towards them. Two officers stepped out, wearing either black or dark blue uniforms and carrying small guns on their belts. The respondent remembered to have seen the following two emblems on the policemen's uniforms:

The two officers approached the two people on the move and asked for their documents.

"We don't have any papers."

The police then asked them to empty their pockets. They kept asking how they got to Sredisce, how they crossed the fence, why they took this route, if there were any other people on the move and which final destination they were heading for. The respondents had the impression that the officers assumed that they had gotten to Sredisce with the help of a smuggler. They truthfully denied that and tried to keep the route they took a secret to make sure other people on the move wouldn't get caught. After hours of questioning though, they finally told the officers how they made it from Bosnia to Sredisce.

After a short while, one other police car and one police van arrived. Both vehicles were white and had the inscription 'POLICIJA'. Three male and one female officer stepped out. One of them talked to the two individuals in German and informed them that he was Croatian police, and the Slovenian officers confirmed that the Croatian and Slovenian police forces were working together on border control.

The individuals had to enter the back of the van which seats and the police drove them carefully to the fence on the Slovenian – Croatian border. They were asked to show where they had crossed, and the respondents showed them the spot.

At that point, they also asked for asylum, but the police refused to consider this request. Instead, they told them they should ask for a visa in their home country or ask for asylum at the official border crossing. The Croatian officer told them that they were now in a Christian country and that there was no place for Muslim people in Europe.

“Go to Muslim places like Bosnia or Abu Dhabi.”

The two people on the move were then taken to the official border crossing at the coordinates 46.3870172, 16.3027547. They waited in the back of the van for around half an hour, assuming they would get pushed back straight away, but were instead driven back into Slovenia without any explanation. After 15 minutes, they reached a Slovenian police station. Using Google Streetview, the respondent recognized the police station to have been the one of Ormoz (SLN) at the coordinates 46.410048, 16.149226:

Inside the police station, their bags and bodies were checked thoroughly and a list of their belongings was made. Finger prints of one finger each were taken, and also a photo of their faces. They had to provide their names, birth dates and addresses in their home country. The police checked their phones and also wrote down their phone numbers. All their belongings were kept by the officers, but finally returned during the push-back.

The officers asked them again for detailed information about the journey from Algeria to Slovenia. They finally informed the officers about the exact route they took from Bosnia, which they had been intending to keep secret at first. An Arabic translator was present.

During the interrogation, the two individuals asked for asylum again. They stressed that they were not safe in Algeria and needed asylum. But again they were told that it was allegedly not possible for Algerians to request asylum. The officers apologized, claiming it was not in their power to give them asylum. Instead, they had to execute the political decision to push people back.

The two individuals were given a shared cell with one bed, and they also got lunch and dinner. They spent the entire day and night in the police station.

On Tuesday morning, April 9, the two of them were told to leave the cell and to enter a van. They were driven to the official border crossing between Sredisce (SLN) and Trnovec (CRO) at the coordinates 46.3870272, 16.3024734. There, their personal belongings were handed over to the Croatian authorities, and they had to switch to a Croatian police van without seats.

In a 20-minute-drive, they were taken to a police station in Strivago (CRO). They were told to fill in a form with their personal information, i.e. their names, parents' names, birth date, birth place, languages and other. The officers checked their phones and again wrote down their phone numbers and did body checks whereby the woman was checked by a police woman, the man by a police man. The individuals then had to enter the van again where they waited for around an hour while their bags were checked outside the van. The officers asked them if they wanted food and took the money they had found in their pockets to buy it for them.

At 12 am, the van drove off towards Bosnia and the driver switched somewhere along the road. There was a big light in the van, but no daylight or opportunity to see where they were driving. The last hour of the drive was on an unpaved path. The van being without seats, the two individuals had to spend the four-hour drive sitting on the van's floor and

the woman started to feel somewhat sick but didn't have to vomit.

When they reached the destination around 4 pm, the two people on the move had to leave the van. There were at least four other police vans and around 15 people on the move from Pakistan arriving at the same time. The Pakistanis told the respondent that they had also been pushed back from Slovenia and also hadn't experienced any violence. The officers had batons in their hands, returned the personal belongings to the individuals, i.e. the bags, phones and money and told them to leave. According to the respondent, the Pakistanis also got their phones back. It turned out they were dropped right at the border outside Kobiljak (CRO) at the coordinates 45.1799117, 16.051078, around 20 km from Velika Kladusa (BiH).

The people on the move walked to the closest paved road and hitchhiked to Otoka (BiH), from where they took the train back to Sarajevo.