

03/10/2018

"[...] I WAS VERY SCARED. THEY TOLD US: 'IF ANYONE RUNS FROM HERE, WE WILL SHOOT HIM.'"

Date and time: October 3, 2018 11:00

Location: Kestenovac, Croatia, a forest in the inner Croatian land

Coordinates: 45.21967740779098 , 15.647671664525774

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 34 person(s), age: 21, 16, 17, others under 40 years old , from: Afghanistan, Bangladesh

Minors involved? Yes

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, threatening with guns, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

Police involved: Croatian officers, caught and robbed by 6 officers (in civil clothes and with civil car, using handguns), physically attacked and deported by 6 officers (two drivers, two in blue uniforms and two in black clothes and with masks, with a white police van, using batons and kicking)

Taken to a police station?: unknown

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of 34 walked from Velika Kladusa (BIH) to Croatia. They didn't have GPS, but were led by two young boys, whom the respondent referred to as "leaders" and whom the group had paid for showing them the way to Italy. They intended to apply for asylum in Italy.

On the second day of walking, on October 3, 2018, around 11 am, the group was caught by six men in a civil car, claiming to be Croatian officers. Some individuals tried to escape and to hide themselves between the bushes, but the officers pulled out their guns and started shouting that everyone had to come out of the bushes because they would otherwise shoot them. Since everybody got scared, they all came out of their hiding places. The officers were acting aggressively towards the group and pointing their guns against the men, threatening them.

"I was really scared as when the police caught us, they pointed their guns against me, and told me not to move. I was very scared. They told us: 'If anyone runs from here, we will shoot him.' "

Afterwards, the officers told everyone to sit down in a line, and they had to hand out all their belongings. They took the respondent's bag with his phone inside and €165.

"All of us had to sit down in the line, and the policemen told us to put our bags in front of us. After, they told us to put all our stuff out of our bags, one by one. All the people had to give everything they had to the police: mobile phones, money, wallets. They [the police officers] took everything we had. They also checked our bodies, and if they did not find anything, they told us to go inside the car. And, they took all of our bags, mobiles, power banks."

Following check-up, this group of officers in civil clothes called another six officers, two drivers, two in blue uniforms and two in black clothes, who arrived at the place with a white police van. Then, this new officer group transported them to the Bosnian border. On the way, they stopped the car two times to pick up more people on the move. After 1,5 hours, they arrived at the border at an abandoned road at around 3 pm. The respondent asked whether he could apply for asylum in Croatia, but didn't get any response.

At the border, the officers pushed back all people on the move, one by one, to Bosnia and physically attacked them:

"The police told one of the men to come out of the car, and they closed the door. We could hear how they were hitting him so much. And after, they said the next one to come out, all of us one by one. There was one wall by the road, and there was standing two policemen with sticks in front of it, and after there was another wall, where there was other two policemen standing in front of it, also with sticks. So, two policemen were hitting us before that wall and when we crossed this wall, another two policemen, who had masks, were again hitting us. We could see only their eyes. They hit all people, and after when we were walking down, they were kicking us. And when we were walking away from Bosnia, they ran and hit us from the back to make us go faster."

The individuals walked down the hill where they were pushed back by the officers, and there they found the first individual of their group who had been attacked. He had some of their bags, as the officers gave them to him after the attack, but when they opened them, they were either empty or contained broken phones, cut cable chargers and empty wallets:

"I had a little bit of money before, but now I don't have any. They also broke our phone chargers, took my phone and my official registration paper in Bosnia. After [the incident], we walked back and stopped a driver whom we paid five euros each for taking us back here [Velika Kladusa]."

The respondent's friend had a fractured hand due to the baton strikes and his arm in plaster. A 36-year-old individual had a fractured toe and got pain in a leg muscle, so that he walked with support of a walking stick (see photos and MSF medical document). Others of the group had scratches around their body and pain caused by the violent attack. .