

06/09/2018

"THEY ASKED SEVERAL TIMES FOR ASYLUM, THE POLICE BECAME ANGRY AND TOLD THEM TO BE QUIET"

Date and time: September 6, 2018 00:30

Location: 10km south east of Rijeka, Croatia

Coordinates: 45.31676851653887 , 14.876426354543014

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 4 person(s), age: 35-46 , from: Iraq

Minors involved? No

Violence used: destruction of personal belongings

Police involved: 3 officers in sky blue Croatian uniforms, 1 civilian without police identification

Taken to a police station?: unknown

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: Balkan Info Van

ORIGINAL REPORT

On September 6th. 2018, a group of four Iraqi men had walked for several days in the wooded hills of the Croatian forest. They were travelling on foot towards the town of Rijeka, following a B road. It was late in the evening and the group was passing through an industrial area with several workshops and factories. They passed a house next to a large factory for aluminum production. A sensor light was triggered on the building and shined on the men. At this point a dog began to bark nearby and alerted by the sound, a man dressed in civilian clothing came from the building. He told them to stop and wait with these words: "Stop, Croatian Police"

The man in civilian clothing told them he was a police officer, but at no point did he show them any identification papers. The four men stopped and sat by the roadside. After a short time one patrol car and one combi vehicle arrived on the scene. The patrol car had two officers inside, the combi was driven by one. They all wore the sky blue shirts and navy trousers of the Croatian police. The four victims were then searched and had all their belongings taken. This included bags, phones, powerbanks, food and money. While the police officers conducted this seizure of items one of the group asked several times for asylum. The victim told the police officers:

"We respect you, (but) we have war in our country."

To this the police replied:

"You are illegal."

When the victim asked again the police became angry and told him to be quiet. They also asked the members of the group where their smuggler was. The men replied that they were just walking alone but the police did not seem to believe them. After being frisked and having their belongings taken away, all four men were loaded into the back of the combi and two officers drove them back to the border to Bosnia.

After approximately 4.5 hours in the back of the combi (with no light or adequate oxygen) the group was unloaded at the Croatian side of the border near the road crossing of Maljevac. At the rural area to the side the police took the mobiles they had confiscated and walked towards the men. The officers looked through the GPS points on the phones and then broke them with a single forceful strike with their batons. Only then did they return the belongings to the men.

It was the middle of the night and the group asked which way to walk back to Velika Kladuša. The Croatian police told them to walk through the woods and sent them in a south easterly direction, meaning it took them double the time to arrive back to the camp than it would have been going the right way.