

17/05/2019

"I THINK THEY USE THIS APPLICATION TO CHANGE THE FACE FROM MAN TO WOMAN, WITH GLASSES, WITH BEARD, WITH HAT, WITH EARS FROM CAT TO MAKE FUN OF US, I THINK, I DON'T KNOW."

Date and time: May 17, 2019 08:00

Location: Metaljika, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Coordinates: 43.55023 , 19.153128

Push-back from: Bosnia

Push-back to: Montenegro

Demographics: 15 person(s), age: one family: 2, 9, 15, 21, 38, 41 years old, other two families: unknown , from: Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Minors involved? Yes

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, threatening with guns

Taken to a police station?: yes

Treatment at police station or other place of detention: detention, photos taken, no translator present

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: Border Violence Monitoring

ORIGINAL REPORT

3 families from Kurdistan Iraq left Pljevlja (MNE) on 11th May for their first attempt to cross the border towards Bosnia. The respondent's family consists of his father (41) his mother (38), himself (21) and his siblings (15, 9, 2), the other families consist of parents with 3 and 2 small children whose age the respondent does not remember. They walked through Montenegrin forests and mountains for four days and continued walking on Bosnian soil after one more day after crossing the border. The respondent was seriously sick and at this point no more able to walk without the support of his father who continued walking in the mountainous terrain with his son's arm around his shoulder. They brought up the rear during this last stage before being caught and felt to cause a burden for the whole group.

In the evening of the 16th May, around 7pm, on a small road near an abandoned farmhouse, two blue-white police vans passed them and ten officers, which the respondent remembered to mostly have had black hair and beard, got off in order to stop the group. They asked them if they have papers and where they are going and the person with the best English skills (who was father of one of the other families travelling with the respondent's) explained to the only officer in the group who spoke a little bit of English that they are on their way to Sarajevo (BiH) where they want to ask for asylum. The officer explained that they will bring them to a police station and organize their transfer to Sarajevo without any problem. Reassured and glad to avoid walking through the forests for one more night, all 15 individuals got into the car and drove 5min to a police station.

At this point, the respondent was nearly unconscious due to his health problems and not able to reconstruct the further events in the interview without his father sitting next to him reporting on the incident in Sorani. The group spent approximately one hour in a small room in the police station waiting for their ride to Sarajevo. They were casually asked

for their nationality but no further questions, and they didn't see the officers writing down anything. Also, the group was not given food nor water and some of the officers were filming them with their smartphones without asking for permission while making fun of them.

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After one hour in the police station, they were told that now they would be transferred to Sarajevo (BiH) and got into the same 2 vans by which they arrived. In the van that the respondent was sitting in, the officers asked for all their registration papers from Montenegro, tore them up while driving and brought the three families to the same place near the abandoned farmhouse where they were picked up before.

"They told us 'go to this house, sleep and try again, or go back to Montenegro'."

While the other two families got off the car without any protest to enter the farmhouse, the respondent's father and mother tried to discuss with the officers and wanted to know why they are not brought to Sarajevo (BiH) but to this dirty place instead. At this point, two officers started shouting at the respondent's family in Bosnian language and punching his father and himself in the ribs, also trying to beat his 15-year-old brother but the respondent's mother prevented them from doing so. All this happened in less than one minute.

The officers left and the three families spent the night in the old farmhouse.

"It was a place for animals, very dirty and very bad smell."

In the morning, around 8am on 17th of May, the three families left in order to continue their journey towards Sarajevo. The respondent however, due to his bad health condition, decided to split from the rest of the group together with his father and instead to try getting medical treatment somewhere. The respondent was sitting next to the road and his father tried to stop the police cars that were passing by, but they just continued driving their way. Finally, his father was so desperate and worried about his son that he knelt down in the middle of the street to force the cars to stop. The next police car stopped and by using gestures and hand signs pointing at his son, he asked them to bring them to the next hospital. Some of the officers were the same who detained them the evening before. The officers agreed and drove them approximately 40min always on the same street to a hospital (probably in Goražde or Foča (both BiH) even though it was not possible to confirm their place of treatment as both hospitals refused to provide information about the incident).

They were escorted to the treatment room by the officers who talked to the hospital staff and left approximately 5min after. Without being asked for papers or anything else, the respondent received treatment from two female and one male doctor who gave him an infusion to reactivate his circulation.

After 15min in the hospital, four other police officers arrived which were wearing the same uniform than the ones that just left. They asked one of the doctors to remove the infusion from the respondent's arm and slightly boxed and slapped the respondent in order to make him stand up. They escorted the two men to a police van and brought them to a place in the mountains where they handed them over to another police officer in a blue police car. This man is described as "tall, big, with blue eyes and bald head, with very blue eyes."

He drove the two individuals to a point near Metaljika (BiH), where he indicated them the way back to Montenegro and told them to get on the ground. When they protested against that, he threatened them by pretending to draw his weapon and then left. The respondent and his father walked arm in arm down the street that the officer indicated them being the one to Montenegro. At this point, both of them were very exhausted.

After 30min walking, a truck driver stopped next to them and told them that the street was designed for woodworkers and that, if they want to go to Montenegro, they have to go the direction they came from and then turn left.

They walked back, crossed the border and were picked up by Montenegrin police which brought them to the local hospital in Pljevlja where the respondent finally received treatment (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Medical Report from the hospital in Pljevlja