

18/12/2018

"IF YOU DON'T STOP, I WILL SHOOT YOU"

Date and time: December 18, 2018 14:00

Location: Crni Lazi, Croatia, close to the Slovenian border in the municipality of Crni Lazi in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County

Coordinates: 45.52234378711899 , 14.484490245996085

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 7 person(s), age: one 71 years old, others unknown , from: Syria, Egypt

Minors involved? Unknown

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, insulting, gunshots, walking barefoot through the snow, officers are taking selfies

Police involved: initial capture: 12 men in green uniforms with "NATO" insignia on it (maybe German), carrying automatic rifles; two officers in the van; pushback: around 9 officers wearing black ski masks and headlamps on their foreheads

Taken to a police station?: yes

Treatment at police station or other place of detention: papers signed, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of seven left Bihac by foot and continued walking for seven days through Croatia. They then approached the Slovenian border, as they had walked in average 18 hours per day and hence covered a long distance. At this point, they had begun to run out of food .

In the afternoon of the seventh day, around 2 pm, the group was around two kilometers away from the Slovenian-Croatian border, close to the municipality of Crni Lazi. At that point, they were stopped by the authorities.

"They look like army soldiers."

There were twelve officers dressed in green uniforms with the "NATO" insignia on it. The respondent believed that they were German , claiming that he heard them speaking in German. Initially, the officers attempted to stop the group and shouted:

"Stop! We will not do anything to you!"

They carried automatic rifles which they used to shoot in the air after the seven of them did not immediately stop. Several individuals attempted to flee at this point, as they were scared of the gunshots and only thinking of running away. But as the respondent started to run, the officers fired close to him instead of in the air, shouting:

"If you don't stop, I will shoot you"

He stopped. As a punishment, he was then forced to take off his shoes and had to walk barefoot for 15 minutes through the snow, a distance of about one kilometer, back to the spot where the group then had to wait for a van to pick them up. There, he received his shoes back. He was in an immense amount of pain and discomfort due to what had happened and told the officers leading him back to the van:

“Just shoot me . “

Four of the group were caught initially, three of them managed to run away.

Initially there was one army car and later four more cars arrived. Several officers were taking selfies with the individuals and making fun of them.

“They act as if they are so happy and proud because they catch us.”

The van arrived with two more officers, an older and a younger one. The older officer was a “respectful man” while the younger one was described as “too much racist”, being angry at the group and spitting on the ground close to them.

The group of now four was then brought to a police station where one of the group-members told the officers present that they were hungry and wanted to eat. They were not given food and instead kept in the van outside of the police station for six hours:

“They police didn’t even allow [us] to take our own food from the bags.”

At that point, there were 15 people on the move inside the van. The additional individuals in the van were Algerians who had also been caught during the same day and brought to the van at the police station shortly after the respondent’s group arrived.

The van’s ventilation was not turned on during this period, making it difficult to breathe. The respondent described banging on the side of the van for a long time to ask for more air:

“I try and try, but nobody answered.”

They were also not allowed to use the bathroom during this time. When the respondent told the police that he wanted to apply for asylum, he was pushed-back into the van and told:

“There is no asylum here in Croatia.”

There were many officers at the police station from which the respondent was fairly sure that it was located in Rijeka, because the drive from their initial point of capture to the station was only fifteen minutes.

No fingerprints were taken, but they had to sign a paper written in Croatian. Hence, they didn’t know what they signed and the respondent was too scared to ask for translation.

“If [I] asked them a question, they would beat [me]”

At around 8 pm, the group of 15 was driven back to a secluded area of the border, south of Velika Kladuša. When the van was parked, the individuals had to get off one by one and were pushed-back across the border. At the border, there arrived two vans with people on the move to be pushed back. The respondent was the first one

of the second group to be pushed-back. After exiting the van, one of the officers grabbed him from the back on his neck, forced his head down and pushed him to the ground. Once he fell on the ground, he was beaten by the officers present with batons until he managed to get up again. He described being insulted during this process, specifically he remembered the officers speaking negatively about Islam. There was one 74-years-old man from Egypt who the officers at the border also beat up with batons just as they did with everyone else in the group.

The officers all wore black balaclavas and had headlamps on their foreheads which shone into the eyes of the people on the move and prevented them from being able to see or orientate themselves.

When he was already at the Bosnian side of the border, the respondent asked the officers where his mobile phone was. The officers started to run after him with their batons, so he ran away himself.