

21/03/2019

“"I apologise for the word choice, but there was shit, piss and garbage all over the floor"”

Date and time: March 21, 2019 20:00

Location: Donji Vaganac, Croatia

Coordinates: 44.9071192 , 15.7327089

Demographics: 6 persons. 4 Moroccans, 2 Algerians. All male, all between 20 and 30 years old + several dozens of other migrants

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating with stick on hands, arms and legs; keeping in cold van; keeping in dirty garage; denial of water

Police involved: More than 10 Croatian police officers in different locations (all men), wearing darkblue uniforms. One car and totally six vans. 1 dog.

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

What was the reaction to this intention?: The policemen said “Ok asyle”, but did not undertake any further actions to consider the request for asylum.

Reported by: [Re:]ports Sarajevo

Original Report

Around 8 p.m. on 21 March 2019, the group of six men crossed the border from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia by foot. They crossed the border approximately at the coordinates 44.9086187,15.7468935 near Vikici (BiH). After some 300 meters of walking into Croatia, they heard a car approaching. The car's lights were switched off. The car stopped at some distance, then came closer and stopped again. Three policemen got out of the car, pulled out their guns and told the six men to stay where they were. They asked “ *Where do you go?* ” The migrants replied “ *Asyle, asyle!* ”. The policemen said “ *Ok asyle, walk!* ”. They were told to walk some 300 meters further into Croatia.

At that point, a van with more policemen arrived. There were now 8 to 10 policemen in total, and one dog. The policemen wore darkblue uniforms. They told the six men to empty all their pockets. They put their money and phones on the ground and were then told to kneel on the ground and hold their hands behind the head. The policemen then poured the contents of the men's bags on the ground. One of the migrants had a sausage in his bag. When the dog came and started to eat the sausage, the policemen started to laugh and let it happen.

Then, the six men were one by one told to go to the police car where they had to put their hands on the car and to spread their legs. The police then searched them. One of the men had tried to hide his phone. When the policemen found it, they started to beat the man with a stick on his fingers, elbows and knees. The man started bleeding on his knee, his elbow and his knuckles as shown in the pictures below.

The six men were then told to enter the backside part of the van. The airconditioning was put on in the migrants' part of the van, and it got very cold in there. After an estimated 1,5 or 2 hours of driving, the van stopped at a police station.

The six men were told to go into a garage. Inside the garage, there were already dozens of other migrants. The interviewees did not notice women or children among them. One of the interviewees described the garage as follows: “ *It smelt like in a dirty toilet. I apologise for the word choice, but there was shit, piss and garbage all over the floor. The smell*

was very bad. The garage was not very big, but there were so many people inside.” The same interviewee told that while entering the garage, he asked the policemen for water to drink but they just laughed and closed the door.

After an estimated 1,5 hours of waiting in the garage, the police came to open and told all migrants to enter five big vans. In the vans, they again started the airconditioning on a very cold level.

After an estimated two hours of driving, the five vans stopped. The migrants were told to get out and found themselves in a mountaineous area. It was in the middle of the night. The policemen had a bag filled with mobile phones, gave it to one of the many migrants and said “ *here you are* ”. They then stood aside and laughed while watching how the migrants – most of whom did not know each other – had to sort out which phone belonged to whom. The main interviewee said that his phone (a Huawei) was not in the bag, and neither were the phones of several other persons – “ *the more expensive phones are kept by the police. They return only the less valuable phones* ”. He commented on the practice of returning the phones in one bag as follows: “ *They do that in order to cause an affray among the migrants and to make fun of us.* ”

The policemen then asked “ *Somebody speaks English?* ”. The main interviewee said yes. The policemen then looked at him with faces full of hatred and shouted at him “ *This is Croatia, here is Croatia!* ”

Then the group of an estimated several dozens of persons was told to stand in a line (two by two persons), and the policemen started to hit people to push them into the line. Seven policemen who did not have guns with them then walked the line of men an estimated 20 minutes into the forest until they reached what was probably the border. The police then told them to go to Bosnia.

At first, there was no road. Later they found a road and followed it. The group of six men stopped in an abandoned house and slept for a few hours. On the next day (22 March 2019), they resumed walking and arrived to Bihac around 4 p.m. On the same day, they took a train to Sarajevo. The interviewees estimated the total walking distance from the place where they had been left out of the vans to Bihac to have been some 20 kilometres.





