

15/03/2019

"SOMETIMES THEY LET YOU OUT ON THE GROUND AND SOMETIMES THEY PUSH YOU DIRECTLY IN THE RIVER."

Date and time: March 15, 2019 00:00

Location: Korenica, Croatia

Coordinates: 44.743079324534335 , 15.706336525194956

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Serbia

Demographics: 5 person(s), age: 25-50 , from: Algeria, Tunisia

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

Police involved: 10 Croatian police officers with balaclavas, guns and batons, 1 police van

Taken to a police station?: yes

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

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: Border Violence Monitoring

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of five men from Algeria and Tunisia was detected in Croatia at sunset on March 15, 2019, near the Slovenian border. Two male Croatian officers in dark blue uniforms with Croatian flags on the arms and uncovered faces arrested them. The individuals requested asylum, which was ignored by the officers, and they drove them in a van to the police station in Korenica.

When they arrived they made them enter an old garage next to the police station, back then used for cars. Now it seems to be used to detain people on the move like a prison or a room especially for push-backs. It is dirty, there is no water or food, no toilets, only dirty bottles on the cold, bare concrete ground. The officers searched the clothes and bags of the individuals, pushing them and shouting at them, insulting them in Croatian.

While searching their whole bodies, they destroyed all their phones and took the power banks and the cables from them. Luckily they didn't find one individual's money, because he was able to hide it.

"But normally when they find it, they take it, no discussion. Because they break your phone, you don't know where you are or what time it is. You have no chance to call anyone or document things."

They didn't give them any papers to sign, neither took fingerprints nor photos and ignored their requests for asylum.

They didn't let them take food or water or anything else with them and locked them in the cold garage.

"Sometimes you have to stay a whole night, without food or toilet."

In this night, the people had to stay six hours in the garage. The respondent was already five times in this garage and the procedure was always similar like the one described above.

Around midnight, they put them with many other people in a small prison van. In total there were 40 persons inside. When they started to drive, they turned the air conditioner on a low level, to make people suffer and freeze. They also drove crazily, stopped several times abruptly, so that the people fell hard against the walls. This trip took around one to two hours.

When they left the van, ten police officers with balaclavas beat them up all over their bodies and pointed with flashlights into their eyes in the middle of the night.

“ They beat you, they kick you and shout at you. All of them had guns on their belt, some of them had batons.”

They even broke the arm of one individual.

“ But if you get out of the car you don’t see much, also because of the flashlights and you don’t look back, you just run. Sometimes they let you out on the ground and sometimes they push you directly in the river.”

From the place where the van had stopped, they had to walk three hours back to Velika Kladuša (BIH).

“ Even if you stop at a gas station and try to call the Bosnian police, they don’t come or help you.”

The respondent mentions that within the last two months, the treatment of the Croatian authorities improved and is now less violent.

“ Before you saw lots of people with black eyes, open wounds and broken legs, black marks on the whole body. But lately they just push you, kick you and break your phone, steal stuff. I think this is also because of reports.”

In his opinion, it is a big problem that Western Europe countries don’t know about this violence.

“ They make no difference, if it is a man or woman or child, they beat them all, kick them and push them naked in the river. Also female police officers beat people.”