

06/04/2019

## **"THEY WERE ALL PUSHED TO THE GROUND, PUNCHED, KICKED, HIT WITH BATONS AND ELECTROCUTED WITH TASERS"**

**Date and time:** April 6, 2019 18:00

**Location:** In the forest next to the river Kolpa. On the Croatian side of the river Kolpa, on the Croatian side of the border, near the Croatian village of Sracak.

**Coordinates:** 45.564979 , 15.299195

**Push-back from:** Croatia

**Push-back to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 15, 18 (interviewee), the other five 20 - 24 years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, electric shock, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Initially there were 4 Croatian police in uniform, with 2 dogs (not used for attacks) and 2 cars. The police radioed for back-up and after a few minutes 6 more police officers came in a van and joined in with the violence.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Yes

**Reported by:** BelgrAid}

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The group of seven Afghans transited across Croatia before arriving at the Kolpa River which marks the Croatian border with Slovenia. On this day, April 6th, the group began to cross at which point four police officers in two cars, with two dogs, found two group-members who were still on the Croatian side of the river.

The 18-year-old respondent's younger brother (a 15-year-old) was on the Croatian side with one other person. The police were aware that this boy was 15 years old, as they found and examined his papers from Bosnia. The respondent described that police officers threatened to beat the 15-year-old minor if the others did not return. The respondent and his older brother swam back across the river, whereas the other three group-members had hidden from the police on the Slovenian side of the river). By the time the respondent and his older brother climbed out of the river, six more Croatian police officers had arrived in a van.

On the Croatian side of the river, the respondent described the ten officers as becoming violent with the group, including the 15-year-old. According to the respondent, they were all pushed to the ground, punched, kicked, hit with batons, and at some point administered electric shocks through a taser-like device to the group-members. The interviewee spoke in English to the officers and asked them to avoid his kidney as he has had long-term medical problems there. This resulted in the officers deliberately aiming for his kidneys while they were kicking him.

The respondent described telling the police officers that they were refugees and that they wanted to seek asylum in Croatia. The police officers continued to beat them and kept shouting "Why you come?" at the group-members.

The officers accused the interviewee of being a smuggler because he could speak English, and the respondent inferred that they focused particularly on him during the violence. The respondent described that the violence lasted around five minutes, and resulted in a worsening of the interviewee's kidney problems, as well as multiple ribs broken. The others had severe bruising. After the beating, a number of the group's possessions were taken. €330 were stolen by the officers from the group, as well as their phones and chargers. Their jackets and jumpers were taken from them – the only clothes they were allowed to keep was one t-shirt, one pair of trousers and their socks and shoes. Their backpacks and the rest of their clothes were thrown into the forest.

The group was handcuffed and put in the van. Two of the group-members were wet from swimming across the Kolpa river, and now none of them had any extra clothing layers. The police officers subjected the group to extreme temperatures in the back of the van using the air conditioning system, switching regularly between extreme heating and extreme cooling for the four and a half hour journey to Zagreb.

At the police station in Zagreb, the respondent once again expressed the intention to seek asylum, saying: 'I want to stay here in Croatia to seek asylum'. The response from the police officer in charge of the police station was: 'You cannot stay here'. The respondent lodged a complaint with the police officer in charge, telling him that the group had had their phones and money stolen by the police officers who had found them. The police officer at the station responded by saying: 'Do you have any more money?'. The interviewee said: 'No, they took everything'. The police officer replied: 'If you had more money, I would take it now'.

At the police, the respondent described being slapped several times by police officers, again targeted because he spoke English. All four of the group were photographed at the police station. They had to write down where they come from and their parents' names.

They were detained in this station for two nights, before being collected from their cell on April 8th sometime between 3:00 and 4:00 am. They were driven in a van and followed by two cars filled with police officers. They were driven to the Bosnian-Croatian border, near Velika Kladuša. The back doors of the van were opened and there were six police officers on each side on the doors in a line (12 officers in total, plus 4 dogs). They were armed with batons. The group was pulled out of the van two at a time, and chased back into Bosnia while being struck by police batons.