

13/01/2017

## "A 13-YEAR OLD BOY COULDN'T STOP CRYING BECAUSE OF THE GAS, THEY LAUGHED AT HIM AND WERE HITTING HIM WITH BATONS."

**Date and time:** January 13, 2017 19:00

**Location:** Border near Horgos, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.17664001458464 , 19.97868455015123

**Push-back from:** Hungary

**Push-back to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: unknown , from: unknown

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, pepper spray, water immersion, dog attacks, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 12-14 police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** no

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

### ORIGINAL REPORT

Testimony 1:

On January 13th, 12 people on the move crossed the Hungarian border near the Horgoš crossing. Initially there were 55 people in the group, and all 55 people crossed the border on to the Hungarian side, after which they separated and 12 people, including the interviewee, were caught by the Hungarian police about two kilometers from the border fence. Four police officers approached them in a marked police car; they had two dogs with them.

First thing the police did was to spray their eyes with gas so they couldn't see clearly. The Interviewee states:

*I tried so hard to open my eyes and remember their faces or numbers on their uniforms but the gas made it impossible. I can only say that they were young men, age 20–22 and that their uniforms were blue. They asked about our nationality and started shouting: 'No Hungary for you', calling us terrorists, Taliban, etc.*

Two additional police cars arrived with eight police officers and four dogs. The police instructed the 12 people on the move to sit in a puddle, with water knee deep. One of the 12, a 13-year old boy was crying because of the gas, the police moved him from the front to the back of the line, so he was sitting next to the interviewee. The 12 year old was crying and the police were laughing at him and hitting him with police batons while yelling at him to shut up. *The 12 year old boy was the youngest in the group of 12 people on the move, but there were three additional minors in the group also.*

The police ordered the group of 12 people to put their hands up and open their jackets, and proceeded to hit them on their ribs and stomachs. Some of the police officers used plastic batons and the rest was armed with metal batons. Afterwards the police searched the 12 people, one person at a time, while the rest remained sitting in the water. The

police ordered each person to stand up so they could remove warm clothing, jackets, gloves, hats, trousers (if someone was wearing more than one pair). The police further destroyed the dinars they found and took any euros that were found in the pockets, and smashed all phones on the ground.

During the search the 12 people had to hold their hands up in the air in the strong, cold wind. After the search was done the 12 people were forced to remain sitting in the puddle of water, and were ordered to put their hands on the next person's shoulders, at which point the police started hitting them on their ribs with batons.

*One of the policeman stood atop my friend's shoulders and started laughing and jumping on him. Then they told us to stand up but keep the line and released the dogs on us from the right side.*

Some of the 12 people tried to move away from the dogs, but they were beaten again and forced back into the "line". The police then proceeded to call off the dogs, but ordered the 12 people to remain in line.

*The police went behind us so we couldn't see them and started tapping us on the shoulders. Anytime one of us turned around to look at them, the policeman would say: Hello! and spray gas in our eyes again. They didn't let us clean our faces, saying that they should stay that way.*

Afterwards the 12 people were taken to a police van, the police were hitting their calves with batons as they were walking. The police didn't let them enter the part of the van meant for transporting people, instead the 12 people were forced into the luggage space, while the police were hitting and pushing them into this small space.

The police then took the backpacks from the 12 group of people, threw away all water and food they found, and proceeded to throw the hard fruits such as apples and oranges in the faces of the 12 people. The 12 people were then transported to the gate, as there were not enough space to sit they had to stand for the duration of the transport to the gate. Another Hungarian police officer, in what was described as a different looking military uniform, arrived with keys to open the gate. This newly arrived police officer approached the group of 12 people, took out his can of gas and sprayed their faces once again. The police proceeded to take pictures of them, ordering them to open their eyes, which was impossible for most as a result of the gas attack. When they were unable to open their eyes, the police started hitting them again, forcing them to look into the camera. Then they brought them to the fence and forced them to read aloud a sign posted on the border fence, saying that they hadn't experienced any physical or verbal abuse from Hungarian authorities.

*Anytime one of us turned around to look at them, the policeman would say: Hello! and spray gas in our eyes again. They didn't let us clean our faces, saying that they should stay that way.*

The police recorded each person reading the sign out loud, as they were reading out the sign the dogs were released on them again, circling around their legs, below the point where the camera could see them. Then they let them through the fence and ordered them to go back to Serbia. There were no Serbian police on the other side.

The episode lasted around two hours, the 12 people were caught at 7pm and reached the gas station in Horgoš at 9:30pm.

#### Testimony 2:

The interviewee crossed the Hungarian border with forty other people. The interviewee do not remember the name of the place or the date. Behind the border fence the group of people on the move started walking very fast for about five minutes. The interviewee and eleven others sat down, while the remaining twenty-eight walked ahead. Between twelve and fourteen police officers arrived; some in a car, some by walking. They had torches and were looking for the group of

people. The group of 12 people stood up and the police came towards them, the police officers started kicking them and hitting them on the ribs with heavy and hard, black batons.

Then the police ordered the group of 12 people to walk away from the dry ground they were sitting on before, and forced them to sit in a big puddle of water, about two inches deep. They told them to put their hands up in the air and came running towards them, hitting their heads with batons. The police then made them take off their hats and gloves.

*When my hands got cold I tried to put them in my pockets but they didn't let me. They were shouting: Take your hands out! and made me unzip my jacket. They emptied our pockets and destroyed our phones by smashing them on the ground with their heels.*

The police then proceeded with hitting the group of 12 people with batons. The interviewee was hit twice in the back, twice in the head and once on their fingers.

*We were still sitting down in the water when they came behind each of us saying: Hello my friend. When we turned to look at them, we were sprayed in the eyes.*

One police officer let the dogs loose on the group of 12 people, and had the dogs climbing and clawing on them.

*When they sprayed me my head went down. Every time I tried to look at them they would hit me in the head. They made us look down like this [lowers his head]. They said we must stay like this. They said: Don't look up! They were hitting us very hard.*

The group of 12 people were forced to sit in the water for about one and a half hours. Afterwards they were forced into the back of a police van, into a small area of the van separated with a net, with the police dogs on the other side of the net. The police used batons to force the group into the small space in the van, one person from the group stood outside unable to get in because the space was too small, the police forced him in inside by pushing and hitting him. The police then closed the door and drove them to the border gate.

When the group of people got out of the car, the police made them stand in a line again. A new police officer arrived and started spraying them, this police officer is described as wearing a different army type of uniform, with something black and white on it. While the remaining police officers had dark blue uniforms. The spray used by the newly arrived officer is described by the interviewee as different from the one used on them earlier.

*It made my eyes hurt. The first one they had used made me cough and want to vomit. I was coughing a lot. I was in the front of the line when they started spraying us.*

The police asked why they tried to cross the border, and then made a video of the interviewee, who was told to read aloud a statement that was on a hook on the border gate, while the police were filming. After everyone had read the statement the police opened the gate, and the group walked back and arrived at the gas station around 21:30.