

13/11/2018

## "WE FELT LIKE MAYBE THEY WOULD KILL US"

**Date and time:** November 13, 2018 06:00

**Location:** road D6 from highway E63, at a bridge over the Dobra river, outside of Karlovac, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.51577621213487 , 15.474186905253532

**Push-back from:** Croatia

**Push-back to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 16,17, others unknown , from: Syria, Egypt

**Minors involved?:** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, handcuffed

**Police involved:** Croatian officers, caught by 6 officers, physical violence at police station, muscular officers (wearing black ski masks, one large officer extremely violent) and at the border 6 officers in black uniforms (wearing black ski masks) with 1 unmasked officer observing

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** papers signed, no translator present, 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

On November 11, 2018, a group of eight men crossed the Croatian border from Velika Kladusa (BIH) with the intention of continuing through the country until Slovenia. They walked for two days before they eventually reached the road D6 from the highway E6 bridge over the Dobra river on the outskirts of the city of Karlovac on November 13. When the eight of them were walking across the bridge in the darkness of the early morning, they were apprehended by six officers.

Immediately, the officers started to treat them with physical violence. The officers did not seek to communicate with them apart from swearing:

*"Motherfucker! Fuck you!"*

The eight individuals were forced to the ground and the officers put their feet on their faces and backs to keep them in place. The 16-year-old minor remembers that, while the officer had his foot placed on his back, he struggled to breathe.

Shortly after, the group was taken to a police station in Karlovac which was about 10 minutes by car away from the bridge. Upon arriving there they were placed inside in a basketball hall, handcuffed, and hit again with batons and fists from muscular officers wearing balaclavas. The group was kept

handcuffed and forced to stand in the basketball court for two hours before their processing. They ended up staying in the police station until the evening without water, food or the possibility to use a toilet.

Then, around 1 am on November 14, they were taken with a van and driven for about 30 minutes to what they described as an “*officer’s building*”. There, they switched cars and were also made to sign several documents written in Croatian and without a translator.

*“ We don’t know what [we signed]. ”*

At the police station, several individuals asked to apply for asylum in Croatia, but an officer responded :

*“ Asylum in Croatia is full. ”*

At some point during the group’s time at the station, an officer approached the van and sucked in his breath rapidly. It was similar to Hannibal Lecter in the movie ‘ Silence of the Lambs ’, and screamed :

*“ We will kill you! ”*

Then, another officer started rattling his baton against the side of the van, attempting to intimidate the passengers.

The men stayed at this place for around one hour, and were kept in complete darkness and unsure about their safety for the majority of the time.

*“ We felt like maybe they would kill us. ”*

When the eight of them were finally brought back to the border, the officers there took them out of the van one by one, locked the door behind each and then beat them up. Altogether, six officers with black balaclavas and black uniforms beat them, while one unmasked officer observed the scene. The eight of them were not able to provide a detailed description of the observer because the other officers pointed with flashlights in their eyes. The eight individuals were beaten for roughly five minutes each before being pushed across the border, at which point the next individual was taken out from the van.

The officers had formed a line with one officer standing every two meters. When the individuals were beaten, one officer was hitting them with a stick, two officers kicking them and also hitting them with batons, and one more officer punched them. They all were hit in their face and sides. Perhaps the most difficult part of their push – back was facing the last officers.

*“ He was very big, the last one, and looks almost like professional boxer. ”*

This large officer waited for them in the middle of the pathway that was formed by the line of the

other officers and hit them in their kidneys and faces :

*“Everybody was beaten in the kidneys, we don’t know why kidneys. It was like we are a punching bag.”*

During this procedure, the eight individuals felt humiliated by the lighthearted nature with which the violence was conducted. While they were struck by the batons and cried out, all they could hear was laughter:

*“When we cry they laugh.”*

Further, the officers at the border broke several of the group’s phones and chargers, and also stole several power banks as well as a tablet. No money was taken from them because they were hiding it in their underwear. While the officers were going through the belongings of the men, in order search for items to steal or break, they pulled out an item and said with exaggeration such as:

*“Ooh a tablet!”*

And then, for example, smashed the item to the ground and laughed.

It was very dark when the group continued walking through the forest after their push-back, and as a result they fell down into something like a lake by accident and all their clothes got wet. That’s why the group was feeling extremely cold and tired when they reached Velika Kladusa again after five hours of walking after the push back.