

22/03/2019

“The man was circled by 5 officers, he couldn't understand what they said to him. One officer pushed him and the others hit him with their fists and legs.”

Date and time: March 22, 2019 14:15

Location: close to train station, Zagreb, Croatia

Coordinates: 454826.06 , 155719.38

Demographics: 2 men from Algeria (28 and 36 years), 2 men from Tunisia (28 and 26 years)

Minors involved? No

Violence used: pushing, beating with fists and kicking (one Tunisian man), pushing to river, destructing a mobile phone, detention in inadequate conditions (cold, no food or water offered)

Police involved: Croatian police officers, caught by 2 and joined by 2 officers (male, blue uniforms, pistols, caps, Croatian flag on the arm and insignia on the shoulders, a police van), at the police station 2 officers, deported by 2 officers (a police van) and joined by 3 officers (a police car)

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

What was the reaction to this intention?: Denied access, instead: violence and push back to Bosnia

Peculiarities: one Tunisian man treated with physical violence, injuries visible bruising on right eye, a cut on lower lip and shins (no photo evidence as the man did not want it to be recorded)

Reported by: [Re:]ports Sarajevo

Original Report

On 22nd March at around 1 pm, a group of migrants arrived into Zagreb (Croatia) bus station and then walked to the train station. They bought train tickets, but they had several hours to wait before their train left – the train was scheduled to leave at around 15:10 – so they left to look for a cafe or restaurant to wait without the chance that the police would question them. The men searched the place to sit for around half an hour before they encountered the police.

A police car drove past them as they were walking on the street, close to the train station around at coordinates 454826.06, 155719.38, about at 2:10-15 pm. The car stopped and two officers exited the vehicle and walked to the men. One man from Tunisia immediately ran away. The policemen did not give chase but the other of them spoke into his radio phone in Croatian.

The policemen asked for the men's passports in English. The interviewee was the only one of the three who spoke English and he responded: *"No I don't have papers, I don't have a passport."* The officers then conferred in Croatian, before the same officer spoke again into his radio phone.

Then the group waited on the street for around 15 minutes, and the men were not bound or handcuffed. After 15 minutes a police van containing a further two officers arrived with the Tunisian man in the back of the van handcuffed with his hands in front of his body. All the four policemen had blue uniforms, pistols, caps, visible Croatian flag on the arm and visible insignia on the shoulders.

The officers did not ask the men any further questions or give them any information. An officer opened the back of the

van and told the men in Croatian to enter the car. They drove for around 10 minutes until they arrived at a police station, which was large, having 3 floors, grey in color, having around 2 metres high metal fence surrounding the building and a gate with single officer in a booth. A car park was at the back of the building.

At this point the Tunisian man's handcuffs were removed. The men were brought out of the van and into the police station and taken into a room on the first floor with nothing in it other than a small table with several chairs around. There were two officers in the room, different officers from the four who they had encountered on the street. One officer searched the men, one by one, laying out all their belongings on the table. Nothing was stolen from the men. After the officer finished searching the men, the interviewee requested seeking for asylum.

"As he took his gloves off I said 'Sir, we want asylum here in Croatia, we want to do asylum here in Croatia'. He smiled and said 'No asylum here in Croatia. Go to Bosnia'."

The officers asked no further questions nor gave the men any further information. The two officers then left the room, closing the door on the men. The men were not brought food or water. The men tried to get the officers' attention to request water and find out more information but the officers did not respond. The men waited in the room for 5-10 minutes.

Then two new officers came into the room and said 'Heidi', which the men understood to mean lets go. They then were led outside into a police van and put into the back. There were two officer in the front of the van, both men. These were new officers that the men had not previously encountered. They then drove for around 5 hours. The men were not given any water or food during the journey. The men were cold during the journey as the air conditioning was turned on.

The van stopped and they waited for around 10-15 minutes. The men then heard another car, which they later found out was another police car, arriving and heard the officers talking. They then started driving again, going for a further 20-25 minutes, to Bosnian border about at coordinates 451222.75, 154823.37.

One police officer opened the door and he said to the Tunisian man who had run away in Zagreb "Y ou come" He exited the van and the officer immediately closed the door. They heard them to talk to him, part in Croatian, part in English, but the interviewee could not hear what was said.

They then heard sounds of the man being beaten. The man later informed the interviewee what occurred. The man was circled by 5 officers, he couldn't understand what they said to him. One officer pushed him and the others hit him with their fists and and legs. The interviewee described that the Tunisian man had visible bruising on his right eye, a cut on his lower lip and his shins. No photo evidence exists of this as the man did not want it to be recorded. One officer then took the man's phone and used a lighter to melt the back, breaking the motherboard and ensuring it was not usable and irreparable.

After about 5 minutes, an officer opened the door and gestured for all the men to exit. At this point the interviewee saw that the 2 officers had been joined by a further 3 officers by a separate police car. The men were standing in the forest on a back road, without tarmac. It was dark. One officer then pointed along the road towards the Bosnian border and said "Go". The men then walked 10 or 15 metres down the road to a small river. The road tailed off to the side in a curve, but the officers gestured for the men to carry on straight, off the road and through a river. The men could not see how large the river was due to the dark. The interviewee said to the officer "How I cross this river?" He didn't answer but came and pushed the Tunisian man they had beaten into the river. The river reached up to about knee height. The river was around 5-6 metres wide. The men walked through the river and then walked for around 1 hour, about 5-6 km, back to Velida Kladusa. It was about at 10 pm when the group was pushed back.