

22/09/2018

"[...] SO I SAID OK, I NEED TO GO ILLEGAL WAY BECAUSE THERE IS NO LEGAL WAY FOR ME"

Date and time: September 22, 2018 13:00

Location: near Rastovača, Croatia

Coordinates: 44.926 , 15.651521

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 4 person(s), age: 24-32 , from: Palestine, Lybia

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, insulting, destruction of personal belongings, reckless driving

Police involved: Two Croatian officers caught him. The men were deported and attacked by a group of 4 Croatian officers, three males and one female in dark blue uniforms. One who attacked them with baton was tall, half bold, blond hair, blue eyes, and could be around 32 years old

Taken to a police station?: no

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent said that he met a Bosnian man, an “ *agent* ”, who offered to transport him by car from Croatia to Italy for €700. This man promised the respondent to first take him by car close to the Bosnian-Croatian border, from where the respondent would walk for 20 min to an arranged spot in the Croatian National Park, where the “agent” would later pick him up and continue to drive him until Italy.

The respondent decided to choose an illegal option of border crossing because he didn't think there was any other way for him to reach protection. All his efforts of legal transit in the past failed. He had first applied for the US visa from Gaza but got rejected with an explanation that he was not qualified enough, although his English was at the level of a native speaker and he was a College graduate. Then, he applied for a visa to Turkey for two times, but again, he was rejected:

“ My life has been full of rejections, so I said OK, I need to go illegal way because there is no legal way for me.”

The “agent” picked the respondent up in Bihac (BIH) and drove him to the Croatian-Bosnian border:

“ Before he left me in that point [border], he asked me for money for oil [petrol]. Then, I showed him how much money I had, I had 60 euros in my wallet. He snatched it from my hand and told ok, walk, don't worry, just 20 min. I will find in the park, we will go to Italy directly.”

So, the respondent walked to the arranged spot in a forest, but no car was waiting for him there. Although he kept calling the “agent”, he couldn't reach him via phone and at some point his phone run out of battery. He therefore

kept walking through the forest, but later decided to sleep and continue in the morning because he got lost and couldn't see anything in the dark:

"I cannot describe how freezing it was that night because, I guess it was under zero, my whole body was shivering. I did have a sleeping or anything because according to that man's offer, he would take me after 20 min. In that time, I did not think I would need a sleeping bag with me. It was freezing, it was entering in my bones. At 5 o'clock, I started to move again."

On the next morning around 11 am, he reached a small town in Croatia, where he wanted to charge his phone and get in contact again with the Bosnian "agent". But he immediately raised attention from a local Croatian old man, who called the police. When he noticed two officers in blue uniforms arriving in a civil car, he tried to hide behind a van on the street. He could hear one officer asking a local boy whether he could see a person on the move around, because they were searching for him. The respondent supposes that the boy pointed behind a van because he was scared to lie. The officer walked behind the van where John was hiding, and shouted at him:

"What are you doing here?"

He then gave him several kicks into his legs. Afterwards, the officers frisked the respondent's body and told him to enter their car.

He was driven to a remote area in a town to an abandoned building. The officers were driving very fast, so he kept falling from one side to the other inside the car. When they reached the abandoned house, he was handed over to another four Croatian officers, three men and one woman, who wore dark blue uniforms. Inside the house, there were already three other people on the move. The four officers were acting aggressively towards the respondent, using abusive language and pushing him so that he fell on the ground. He asked the officers whether he could apply for asylum in Croatia and tried to explain to them that he needed international protection due to the conflict in Gaza, where he came from:

"I need to seek asylum I come from Palestine, Gaza, the situation in my country is very bad, there is a conflict and no job for me and my family. I need to have protection in Europe. But the police just said: 'You need asylum?' and laughed at me."

Further, the officers took the individual's phones and returned them later damaged (see photo). Around 1 pm, after one hour in the house, the officers transported all of them to the Bosnian border, around 20 km away from Velika Kladusa (BIH). Once arrived at the border, the officers shouted at the individuals to run, followed by physical attacks with batons.

"When they said to me run, I knew they were going to beat us. Especially one man who was looking very scary. And they did. When I was running they hit me into the back part of my head, neck and back [crying]" ... "I experienced three wars in Gaza in 2008, 2012, and 2014 when my house and the house of my neighbors was destroyed, but I have never experiences so much inhumanity like in Croatia. Croatian police were acting like beasts."

The respondent then walked through the forest but didn't know where he was going, so he stopped at an abandoned house and stayed there over the night. The following day when he was walking, a local Bosnian man stopped his car and took the respondent and the other men back to Velika Kladusa (BIH).