

30/08/2018

"THE POLICE OFFICERS WERE ACTING AGGRESSIVELY, AND POINTED GUNS AGAINST THE FATHER OF THE FAMILY."

Date and time: August 30, 2018 23:00

Location: Near Velika Kladuša, Croatia

Coordinates: 45.21749534471175 , 15.72892478613278

Push-back from: Bosnia

Push-back to: Croatia

Demographics: 13 person(s), age: unknown , from: unknown

Minors involved? Yes

Violence used: threatening with guns, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

Police involved: Four Croatian police officers, wearing blue shirts and black vests, in unmarked police car.

Taken to a police station?: yes

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Unknown

Reported by: No Name Kitchen

ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 30th. 2018, a family of three and ten men walked from Velika Kladuša (Bosnia and Herzegovina), crossed the border to Croatia, and walked further into the Croatian inner land where they were supposed to be picked up by a taxi. After two days of walking in Croatia, at around 11 pm, the whole group was detected by four Croatian police officers wearing blue shirts and black vests, who were sitting in a civil car (unmarked police car). When the police approached the group, the mother of the family explains that she started crying and begging the police to let them go, but the police did not listen.

All interviewees explain that the police officers were acting aggressively towards them, pointed guns against them, and attacked the father of the family while his wife and two year old daughter were standing next to him. Afterwards the police conducted body searches and robbed them of their belongings:

When they [police] saw us, they put out their guns and pointed them against Aziz. I don't know why. After the police attacked Aziz, pushing him. ... They searched us maybe ten times. They took off our clothes, they searched through our bags, took mobile, power bank, sim cards, everything. They stole our phones, 12 phones in total, power banks, and headphones .

The police did not take off my clothes for some reason, they respected that I was a woman. But they [police] searched me as well, touching me and stole my two power banks. From some people they [police] took 500 euros from other 200 euros maybe 15, different for different persons .

The mother of the family further explained that her daughter was cold, thirsty, and hungry, so she asked the police for water and food. But the police did not care that they had a baby with them and refused to provide water and food. Afterwards, the police told the family to walk from the forest back to Bosnia, while they wanted to take all single men to a police station. The father of the family asked the police if they could transport him, his wife and his small daughter

back to the Bosnian border because it was dark, night and the family did not know how to walk back without a phone and GPS navigation. But the police rejected his request and left the family in the forest, where the family stayed overnight and in the early morning, they walked back to the makeshift camp in Velika Kladuša (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

All single men were taken by a van to the police station. The interviewee, from the group of men, did not know the location of the police station because the car had dark windows, so he could not follow the direction of their journey. The interviewee states that the journey to the station took over an hour. The men arrived at the police station at around midnight. According to Sajid, the police kept questioning the men for three hours, repeating the same questions with the aim to identify a smuggler within the group:

We stayed the whole night in the police station. Maybe until 3 am, they kept asking us: "Who are you? Why are you coming here? All the time, again and again. Just asked, answer, asked, answer. They were trying to find the leader, the smuggler.

The single men were all deported by a police van to Starlik the following day early in the morning, from there they walked back to Velika Kladuša.

At the end of the interview, the mother of the family explained that they decided to hire a smuggler as there was no legal and safe transit to Europe for the family. The interviewee further explained that without a smuggler's car transport, it would take them two weeks of walking in the forest with their baby. Such a walk would be difficult and risky for the whole family. For this reason, they became reliant on the smuggling networks, who have financially exploited them multiple times.

Walking in the forrest with baby is very difficult. It is very cold in the night. We do not have enough food. In the forrest, we eat mainly biscuits and drink the water from a river. For this reason, my daughter's stomach is very bad, and she kept vomiting the last time in the forrest. We cannot just walk the whole way so that is why we must hire a smuggler. But the last two times he did not show up and we were stuck in the forrest for days. It is always the same – we clean ourselves, have a rest, border crossing, and back, we clean ourselves, have a rest, border crossing and back, and again and again. I am very tired of this .

The father of the family was asked if he had any physical injuries caused by the police attack, he responded:

I am [physically] good but mentally not good. My mind is not good. I am very stressed. I did not sleep the whole night.