

04/04/2019

"NEXT TIME WE CATCH YOU IT WILL BE DIFFERENT, WE WILL KICK YOU AND SEND YOU TO JAIL!"

Date and time: April 4, 2019 08:00

Location: outside Melinovac (HR)

Coordinates: 44.7329662 , 15.9124559

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 4 person(s), age: 20-28 years old , from: Syria, Morocco, Algeria

Minors involved? No

Violence used: destruction of personal belongings, reckless driving

Police involved: 3 Croatian policemen with dark blue uniforms, insignia on sleeve, batons. 1 van with «Police» written on the side

Taken to a police station?: no

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: No

Reported by: [Re:]ports Sarajevo

ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a Syrian man, set out from Bihac with two Moroccans and an Algerian on March 31st. All of them were aged between 20 and 28 years old. Over the course of four days, the group walked approximately 60 kilometers in Croatia through mountainous and forested terrain. On the fourth day, (April 4th) the group was intercepted at a road crossing at around 5:00 am by three police officers. The officers told them to stop, and stated to the group:

"We saw you coming, 20km away."

The officers' attitude was direct, but generally polite, according to the respondent. The respondent believed that the policemen knew that they were too tired to run away. The officers then ordered them to hand over their phones, before pushing and shoving the group-members. When in possession of their phones, the respondent described the officers as breaking them in front of the group.

They were then loaded into the back of a van which had the word "Police" written on both sides. In the van, there was a barrier separating the front seats, which were taken by the police, from the back seats, which were taken by the group. The police then asked the group where they had started their journey from. The group told the officers that they had started from Velika Kladusa because they preferred to go back to Bihac and they had heard that the police usually pushes people back to the opposite place than the place they state. The group was then asked how many times they had tried to cross the border before. All of them said that it was their first time. The police officer then threatened them:

"Next time we catch you it will be different, we will kick you and send you to jail."

The group was kept for somewhere between 2 and 3 hours in the back of this van as it drove back to the Bosnian-Croatian border. The respondent recalled that the driving was erratic, changing from fast to slow and to fast again..The

journey took longer than it should have because the police stopped for a coffee break on the way. Meanwhile, they left the group in the van without food or water.

At around 8 am on April 5th, the van reached the Bosnian-Croatian border near Melinovac (approximate coordinates 44.7329662, 15.9124559), some ten kilometers away from Bihac (BiH). The officers had thus indeed taken them to the opposite place from what they had stated. The policemen told them to get out and said:

“Do not try again!”

It took the group four hours to walk the ten kilometers back to Bihać as they reported being very tired and dehydrated.