

31/03/2019

## "THEY RAN AWAY AND SUDDENLY HEARD ONE OF THEM, 27 YEAR OLD OUSSAMA, SCREAM."

**Date and time:** March 31, 2019 03:00

**Location:** Otočac, Croatia, 20km east from Otočac, at the north-west end of the national park Plitvička jezera

**Coordinates:** 44.927919 , 15.455765

**Push-back from:** Croatia

**Push-back to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: unknown , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Different police presence in different places, no detailed description

**Taken to a police station?:** no

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Yes

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of ten men from Algeria started their journey in Izačić, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The exact date is not known. On March 31, 2019 thou, they were walking through a forest a bout 20 km east from Otočac, at the north-west end of the national park **Plitvička jezera** . At 3am in the night, the group saw a light and assumed that it was the police. They ran away and suddenly heard one of them, 27 year old Oussama, scream. He had fallen into a cave-like hole in the ground, where he would later die.

Two of the group managed to walk around 14 km to the next village. Around 12am they explained their situation to a Croatian woman. She called the police which arrived 20 minutes later. As an excuse for their delay, the police claimed to have waited for a train to pass at an intersection. The police also ordered a forest-guide to come. The group then witnessed the forest-guide taking preparations to recover Oussama's dead body — nine hours after his death. When they arrived at the whole where Oussama died in, the officers only asked for phones and money. Instead, they took their phones away, destroyed some of them, and burned their sleeping bags. At no point of time the police showed any interest or concern, nobody asked about their situation after the tragic incident or what happened with their friend.

The police then brought the rest of the group to "a garage" in Croatia, approximately one hour away by car.

*"The garage was full of urine."*

Nonetheless, the group had to stay there for three nights without lights, sleeping in the cold.

Afterwards they were brought to the detention camp in Trilj. There they were detained the second time, as in the first place without medical treatment. The police took all the food from the group and only gave them a little to eat after

leaving them two days without any food. But the food situation didn't improve significantly:

*"The portions were really small and we also had to pay for them."*

All of them had to give fingerprints of all fingers and photos were taken. The police told them to smile in the camera and made fun of them, which the group perceived as very disrespectful. They further had to sign around 10-12 papers, written in Croatian and without any translation. In addition, the police officers even covered the parts of the text of the papers with their hands, so that it wasn't possible to read it, they just pointed at the parts where the people had to sign the documents. None of the nine individuals has any documents as the Croatian police never handed them over to them. The group also expressed their claim for asylum at the police station and as well at the camp in Trilj.

After ten days of detention, on April 11, the group was deported back to Bosnia. The Croatian police let them off the car on the Bosnian side of the border near the town Bihać. At around 8pm the group of nine arrived in the center of Bihać.

During the whole process none of the refugees experienced physical violence from the police, but they still felt treated in a humiliating way, especially regarding the previous decease of their friend.

The group of nine thou want the body of their friend to be returned to Algeria.

*"We want him to be buried in a dignified way."*

[Personal assessment of the interviewer:

It is very unusual to keep people for such a long amount of time in the detention prison in Trilj. Most of the time it is almost empty because people are brought directly back to Bosnia. It is possible that the Croatian police kept the rest of the group in Trilj to prevent that information about the incident reaches the public in time.]

#### **Dead person:**

Name: Oussama

Surname: B. (full name is known to Border Violence Monitoring)

Age: 27 years old, exact date of birth is unknown

Place of birth: Skikda, Algeria

*Pictures of the hole where 27 year old Oussama fell into and died.*



<https://www.borderviolence.eu/wp-content/uploads/0d23eae273e6d94e6bb9e3705d4fd931.0.mp4>