

03/03/2019

“While waiting [at the hospital] the men asked the police again for the asylum process. There the officers said: 'This is not on our level.' [...] 'You have nothing, why are you acting like this?!'”

**Date and time:** March 3, 2019 15:00

**Location:** about 200 to 300 meters across border of Slovenia, close to Čakovec, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 46.62142441518931 , 16.283825139115265

**Demographics:** 2 men from Algeria (interviewed 23 years), witnessing catchment of a third Algerian man

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** making to sign documents without translation, denying right to proper medical help, detention

**Police involved:** Croatian police officers, caught and soon joined some officers (normal black/blueish police uniform with the official sign of the Croatian police, white/blue police car with official police sign on it), at the first police station 10 officers (including the officers from the border apprehension, one talking English), taking to hospital and at the second police station some officers, deported by 3 officers (dark blue/black uniforms, no hat, a van), at the border 4-5 officers

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

**What was the reaction to this intention?:** Denied access, instead: taking pictures and fingerprints, making to sign documents written partly in Croatian (without translation), push back to Croatia

**Peculiarities:** One man injuring his leg before being caught, taken by the police to hospital for examination, not receiving any explanation or treatment. Another man caught directly after the Bosnian-Croatian border close to Bosanski Brod (BiH) about at 2-3 am on the 3rd March, still in detention. The officers deporting the men buying beer on the way to the border.

**Reported by:** [Re:]ports Sarajevo

## Original Report

A group of three men started their journey from Bihać (BiH) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2019. They took a bus up to Bosanski Brod (BiH). From there they crossed into Croatia over the official bridge around at 2-3 am the following night. They got seen by the border police and had to escape. All the men ran into different directions. The interviewee jumped down from stairs and hurt one of his foot. He and another man of the group could hide from the police. The third one got apprehended on the bridge right away, and this man is now in detention, the interviewee says. The two who got away from the police hid themselves for about 1.5 hours until the police stopped looking for them.

*“ They were looking for us with flashlights all over .”*

After that, about at 7 am on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March the two men walked into the next town and took a bus from there up to Zagreb (HR). They had no problems with buying their bus tickets. Around 10:30 am the two men took another bus from Zagreb to the Slovenian border to Varaždin (HR). The interviewee had real pain in his injured foot. The men were looking for medicine in the town. It was Sunday and very calm. They found a pharmacy where the woman wanted 22 euros for the medicine. It was too expensive for them so they left again. They walked to the next town, Čakovec (HR). There they found an abandoned house where they slept for a few hours. Later that day, they

started walking towards the border of Slovenia. Their phone was down and they didn't have GPS, so it was hard to find a good way. Twice a police car passed them. They could hide and did not see the police. Around the border of Slovenia a car stopped, where a woman and a man were sitting inside.

*"The woman knew directly what was happening and saw my injured foot."*

The couple offered them to take them into their car over the border for 100 euros. The two didn't have this much money. The men could only give 50 euros and the couple took the men anyway into their car. Right away about 200 to 300 meters across border police car turned up. The group got stopped by the police.

*"Moi comme je vu la police. J'étais brisé."*

The officers asked for the documents of the group. The woman and the man showed their ID's, and the interviewee told the police that he and his friend do not have any documents. The police asked if the men paid for getting taken over the border by car. The interviewee denied and explained that the couple took them because of his injured foot. The police officers were wearing normal police uniforms (black/blueish with the official sign of the Croatian police). They made a call and another officer came by car (white/blue with official police sign on it) turned up. The interviewee and his friend got taken to a police station in Čakovec (HR).

There at the police station were about 10 police officers, including the officers from the border apprehension. One police officer talked English. The interviewee and his friend got a piece of paper, where they had to write down their name, name of their father, nationality and from which country they entered Croatia. No fingerprint or photos were taken at this time. During the detention the police gave some food and water to the men. The interviewee expressed several times to the officers his intention to seek for asylum. The officers answered him:

*"Step by step – first we will go to the hospital and then we will see."*

The police officers drove the interviewee and his friend to the hospital. In the hospital the interviewee got a wheelchair and they took a radiography of his foot. While waiting the men asked the police again for the asylum process. There the officers said: *"This is not on our level."* The doctor came back and talked only to the officers. The interviewee didn't get explained the results of the radiography or anything else. One police officer said then: *"You have nothing, why are you acting like this?!"* and the men got taken back but to a different police station.

*"I had tears in my eyes – I wanted asylum!"*

At this second police station the men had to fill in an official form. It was written in English and Croatian. What was exactly written in the form, they did not understand. The men signed it and gave it back. After about 20 minutes the police officers came back with another paper, which they had to hold while pictures were taken of them. The interviewee asked, if this all was for asylum, but the police answered:

*"We will take you back to Bosnia. We can do nothing for you."*

Three police officers, different than the ones in the morning, drove the men by a van to the border of BiH around the area of Velika Kladuša. Those three officers were wearing dark blue/black uniforms and no hat like the earlier ones with the official Croatian police uniform. The officers gave the men a bottle of water for the ride. Around 6 pm the following evening they started in Čakovec (HR) and about three hours later, around at 9 pm, they got to the border. The interviewee explains that during the way there he saw how the police officers stopped at a small shop to buy some beer for themselves. At the border the officers opened the door of the van. The interviewee saw

another police car standing there with about 4 to 5 police officers. He and his friend got taken out of the car and ordered to towards the border for about 500 meters. On the Bosnian side, the men continued to Velika Kladuša (BiH). They walked to the official camp of Miral but got turned away. The followibg night they spent it in the doorway of a mosque in Velika Kladuša and the next day (on the 4 th March) they made their way back to Sarajevo.

