

11/02/2019

"YOU WON'T COME BACK TO MOSTAR! IF YOU COME BACK, WE WILL PUT YOU IN PRISON"

Date and time: February 11, 2019 00:00

Location: Vinjani Gornji (official border crossing)

Coordinates: 43.4601109 , 17.2848895

Push-back from: Croatia

Push-back to: Bosnia

Demographics: 4 person(s), age: 17,20,24,26 , from: Algeria

Minors involved? Yes

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, theft of personal belongings

Police involved: More than 10 police officers in Croatia and four police officers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (all men).

Partly dark blue uniforms, partly black uniforms with batons, guns and masked faces in Croatia. Black uniforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 1 blue Volkswagen and 1 blue van in Croatia. 1 black van in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Taken to a police station?: yes

Treatment at police station or other place of detention: photos taken, personal information taken, no translator present, denial of food/water, handcuffed

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: Yes

Reported by: [Re:]ports Sarajevo

ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of four men started their journey in the early morning of February 10, 2019 , by taking the regular bus around 7 am from Mostar (BIH) to Posusje (BiH , 43.471353,17.3199588). They arrived in Posusje around 8 .3 0 am and crossed the border by foot not far from the official border crossing at Vinjani gornji (43.4600983,17.28512). After around two hours of walking, they reached Imotski (CRO, 43.446294,17.2125697). From there, they took another regular bus to Split and switched into another bus to Zagreb. They arrived at Zagreb bus station in the afternoon of February 10 .

However, when they got off of the bus, four officers were there and asked for their documents, so they answered that they don't have documents. After two more officers had joined, the people on the move were taken to a police station in a blue Volkswagen with some black color on it. Two of the officers accompanied them and after a 10-15-minute drive, they reached the police station.

At the police station, all four individuals got handcuffed. They didn't have to sign any papers, but were told to write down their names and photos were taken. The officer didn't believe that the youngest was only 17 years old. When the group of four asked for a translator they were told there is none. The officers wanted to know where they had crossed the border, and they said that they entered Croatia between Posusje and Imotski.

One officer asked :

" What do you need in Croatia? "

They answered:

"We want to have asylum in Croatia."

The officer said:

"No asylum here in Croatia, go back to Bosnia."

So the respondent asked:

"Why no asylum, we are in the capital of Croatia here."

The answer of the officer was:

"No, you can't stay in Zagreb or in the rest of Croatia. It is closed. You can take asylum in Bosnia."

When the respondent asked again why that was the case, the officer slapped him and the other three individuals on the back of their heads. Then he and four of his colleagues in dark blue uniforms started to beat them on their arms.

The officers took their money, €400, four phones and four power banks as well as their luggage. When the respondent asked the officers for his bag because he wanted to eat some of his food in there, the police refused to hand it out to him. They also didn't give them food or water.

In total, the group of four was kept at the police station for around twenty minutes. Then, four other officers arrived, wearing black uniforms, masks on their faces and carrying batons and guns. They told them to enter the backspace of a big blue van which had a camera on the ceiling of the backspace. The four individuals stayed handcuffed during the whole ride.

After several hours of driving, the van arrived at the official border crossing between Imotski and Posusje (43.4601226, 17.2844274). It was dark by now. The Croatian officers made a phone call, and after less than five minutes four Bosnian officers arrived with a big, black van. The Bosnian officers were wearing black uniforms with white letters «Policija» on their back. The Croatian officers took the handcuffs off and returned their luggage, however they didn't return their money and their phones. They then pulled out their batons, beat the four individuals, shouting:

"Don't come back!"

Afterwards, they had to enter the Bosnian van and were driven for around 20-30 minutes or 20 kilometers until they stopped in a dark forest. On the ground there was some snow and it was very cold. The four Bosnian officers then told the group of four to leave and not to return to Mostar. The respondent asked if the officers could bring them to Mostar in order to take a bus or a train from there to Sarajevo. But the officers refused and told them:

"You won't come back to Mostar! If you come back, we will put you in prison. Or we will take you over the border to Montenegro."

They started to threaten the migrants with their batons and told them to leave now.

The four of them thus started to walk in the forest but stopped after a while. It was a very cold night. They had food with them in their bags and managed to make a fire, but couldn't sleep. They spent the rest of the night in the forest.

The next morning , February 11 , 2019, they resumed walking. After a round five kilomete r s, they met a Bosnian man who was very tall. They told him their story and asked him for money to pay for bus tickets to Sarajevo. He gave them some money and showed them the direction to walk to the bus station of Mostar.

“ He was a good man . ”

After another 15 kilomete r s of walking , the group reached the bus station of Mostar without being seen by the police. They bought tickets and returned to Sarajevo by bus.