



Border Violence
Monitoring Network



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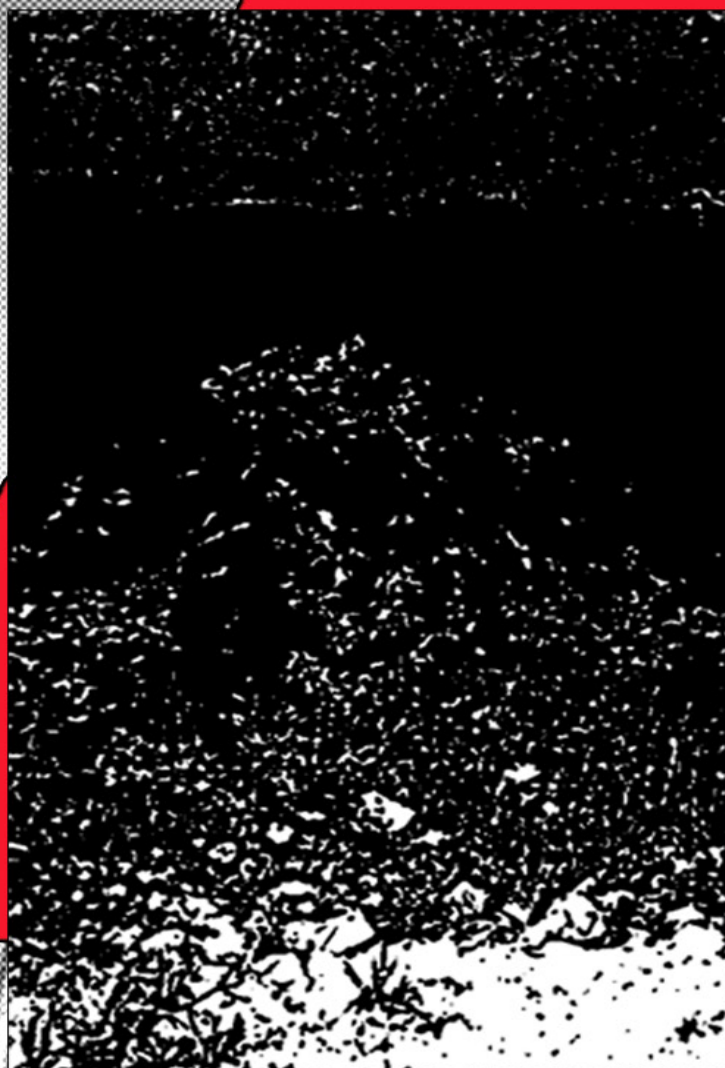
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ILLEGAL PUSH-BACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS

BALKAN REGION
JULY 2020



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) published 21 cases of illegal pushbacks during June, documenting the experience of 389 people whose rights were violated at the European Union's external border. Volunteers in the field recorded a variety of cruel and abusive acts by officers, representing at least ten different national authorities. This report summarises the data and narrative testimony shared by people-on-the-move, highlighting the depth of violence being carried out in the service of European borders.

Special focus is given to the Romanian context where a sequence of push-backs in the last two months have alluded to the practice of Romanian authorities apprehending transit groups in Serbian territory before bringing them into Romania for short periods of detainment. Two reports conducted by members of the Border Violence Monitoring Network allude to this practice and anecdotal evidence from the field reinforces these accounts.

Further analysis covers the way in which chain push-backs from Italy to Bosnia continue to be legitimized by the Italian state. An analysis of these trends written by volunteers on the ground in Trieste works to contextualize this trend amongst the push-backs which continue to flow in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

New in this report, BVMN also discusses several cases of pushbacks across the Aegean sea where the Greek authorities used worrying methods to force transit ships back into Turkish waters or sink them. Further analysis is also given to the deployment of Frontex in their Montenegro mission. New developments in both Bosnia and Slovenia are also noted, showing the situation on the ground and in the legal realm respectively, as it relates to pushbacks.

**BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in Greece and the Western Balkans including No Name Kitchen, Rigardu, Are You Syrious, Mobile Info Team, Josoor, [re:]ports Sarajevo, InfoKolpa, Escuela con Alma, Centre for Peace Studies, Mare Liberum, Collective Aid and Fresh Response.*

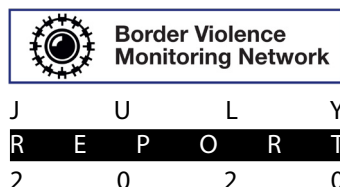


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GENERAL

REPORTING NETWORK

BVMN is a collaborative project between multiple grassroots organisations and NGOs working along the Western Balkan Route and Greece, documenting violations at borders directed towards people-on-the-move. The members have a common website database, used as a platform to collate testimonies of illegal pushbacks which are gathered through interviews.

TERMINOLOGY

The term *pushback* is a key component of the situation that unfolded along the EU borders (Hungary and Croatia) with Serbia in 2016, after the closure of the Balkan route. Push-back describes the informal expulsion (without due process) of an individual or group to another country. This lies in contrast to the term “deportation”, which is conducted in a legal framework. Push-backs have become an important, if unofficial, part of the migration regime of EU countries and elsewhere.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological process for these interviews leverages the close social contact that we have as independent volunteers with refugees and migrants to monitor pushbacks at multiple borders. When individuals return with significant injuries or stories of abuse, one of our violence reporting volunteers will sit down with them to collect their testimony. Although the testimony collection itself is typically with a group no larger than five persons, the pushback groups which they represent can be as large as 50 persons. We have a standardised framework for our interview structure which blends the collection of hard data (dates, geo-locations, officer descriptions, photos of injuries/medical reports, etc.) with open narratives of the abuse.

ABBREVIATIONS

BiH - Bosnia and Herzegovina
HR - Croatia
SRB - Serbia
SLO - Slovenia
ROM - Romania
HUN - Hungary
ITA - Italy
MNK - North Macedonia
ALB - Albania
GRK - Greece
TUR - Turkey
EU - European Union

TRENDS IN BORDER VIOLENCE

PRACTICES ON THE AEGEAN SEA

In response to the increasing securitisation of the Evros land border and renewed commitments to [constructing a fence](#) in the region, migratory routes have again shifted to crossings via the Mediterranean. This has been reflected in the upsurge of sea pushbacks over the last few months, with reports in outlets such as [Deutsche Welle](#), [Der Spiegel](#), and [Bellingcat](#) that describe boats being attacked by masked men who remove their engines, or officials from the Hellenic Coast Guard ignoring distress signals and calls for help. Such incidents violate commitments to fundamental rights and obligations outlined in customary, international and European law ratified by Greece.

In the month of July, BVMN partners in the region reported on such incidents and provided further corroborating evidence of a systemic pushback regime in the Aegean. Of at least 60 boats known to our partners that attempted to cross the Aegean over the course of the month, only 13 arrived (10 of these in Lesbos). At least 47 boats were pushed back to Turkey in July, not only violating national, European and international law but also putting the lives of hundreds of individuals at severe risk.

BVMN's partner in Turkey, Josoor, obtained videos of one pushback incident on July 11th as it was carried out by a Hellenic Coast Guard ship. Several officers on board the vessel are wearing the official HCG uniform and black balaclavas, which have also been identified as the perpetrators of [multiple pushbacks](#) on the Evros land border.



MASKED HELLENIC COAST GUARDS FROM THE VIDEO OBTAINED BY JOOSOR



PANORAMA STICH WITH IDENTIFIED HELLENIC COAST GUARD IN THE VIDEO OBTAINED BY JOOSOR

This indicates an institutionalised connection between the two pushback sites, as well as a link to the Greek coastguard. One officer is visibly holding a harpoon, an instrument frequently used to disable engines and damage rubber dinghies in order to sabotage the crossing. The HCG crew pushed the dinghy back into Turkish waters, where it was eventually returned to Turkey by the national coastguard. A full analysis of these materials will be released by BVMN later this month.

The worrying trend of [people "disappearing"](#) after arriving on Greek shores also continued in July. The worrying trend of people "disappearing" once they arrived on shore of Greek islands also continued in July. At least 120 people who arrived on Rhodes as confirmed by locals at the scene were not recorded and subsequently "vanished". One of Josoor's partners talked to the group in question, who confirmed that the group had been taken back to Turkey. On July 26th, for the first time since February 2020, arrivals were officially registered on Samos - after five months in which several boats were proven to have arrived on shore, but all taken back to sea and abandoned in life rafts in the highly criminal practice initiated by the HCG this year.

ROMANIAN PUSH-BACKS RECORDED IN ŠID

NNK volunteers in Šid have collected 8 testimonies of push-backs from Romania to Serbia since June, a fraction of the true number. Two of these groups, curiously, described Romanian authorities entering Serbia and pulling them into Romania for short periods of detainment. In the [first](#) of these testimonies, which referred to an incident in mid-June, two families

described being forcibly taken across the Serbian border to Romania near Kikinda by Romanian authorities. These authorities held the family in a field for a short period of time, questioning the group, stealing their belongings, and becoming physically violent with the male group-members before pushing the group back into Serbia within an hour.



In the [second](#) of these testimonies, a group of families described being pulled into Romanian territory on July 11th, outside of the village of Kusic in Serbia, after which they were detained for a period of around two hours. During this time, the group described that the Romanian authorities questioned them about their intentions and became physically violent with the adult group-members.

Further anecdotal evidence further supports credible concerns for this issue, the primary respondent for the second report referenced here described experiencing this behavior from Romanian authorities on more than ten separate occasions.

"ALL BUT THE CHILDREN WERE BEATEN; THE MEN WERE HIT ON THEIR HANDS AND FACES. THE 15 YEAR OLD SISTER OF THE MAN WHO MADE THIS REPORT WAS SPARED ONLY BECAUSE SHE SAID SHE WAS SICK AND LOOKED SUFFICIENTLY ILL. THEIR PHONES, POWER BANKS, ID CARDS, BAGS WITH BELONGINGS AND MONEY WERE STOLEN."

Volunteers from No Name Kitchen in Sid described talking to at least two other, unrelated groups in the last month which described similar behavior.

"THE POLICE ALSO TOOK THEIR BELTS AND SHOELACES, TO MAKE WALKING DIFFICULT. THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE GROUP ALL HAD THEIR BODIES PATTED DOWN AND SEARCHED BY MALE POLICE OFFICERS."

While, it is hard to determine exactly to what extent these testimonies allude to broader practices along the Romanian border with Serbia this summer, the collection of strikingly similar testimonies from different groups referring to incidents which took place more than 50 km and 30 days apart from each other is cause for further scrutiny.

The Romanian-Serbian border is largely under-covered area and in the months ahead, further scrutiny should be placed on the behavior of Romanian authorities described in these and many other testimonies this summer.

INCREASED FRONTEX PRESENCE AT GREEK BORDERS TO EUROPE

In July, BVMN received [first hand testimonies](#) of push-backs at the Greek-Albanian border. This border, which had already become a standard route for people on the move journeying through the Balkan corridor, has witnessed increasing numbers of attempted crossings in the last months. The two main pull factors were [mass evictions](#) which took place in the beginning of June and left many families homeless, and the COVID-19 pandemic which has made other avenues for leaving the country unviable.

According to first hand accounts and to the testimonies collected from local and refugee populations living in the region around the Greek-Albanian border, push-backs from Albania to Greece occur on a daily basis. Every day it is possible to see single men and families with children pushed back from Albania and left in bad condition in the middle of the streets in border areas, and then forced to walk for many kilometers in order to reach the closest city centers or bus stations. One of the push-backs witnessed by BVMN involved two young Syrian men (one of whom was using crutches) who were stopped by Albanian police while entering the country and pushed back to Greece. They were left in the middle of nowhere close to Ieropigi village and had to walk several kilometers before reaching Mesopotamia bus station. Testimonies suggest that push-backs are perpetrated both by Albanian police and by Frontex officers who initiated their mission at the Greek - Albanian border in May 2019. That mission, the first of its kind on a sovereign territory of a non-EU member state, was to be replicated in other Balkan countries such as Montenegro and North Macedonia.

Frontex presence is also visible in many northern Greek cities such as Konitsa and Ioannina and in border areas: roads leading to the Albanian border are patrolled 24/7 by local police cars, Greek army vehicles, Frontex Land Rovers and EU Member States and Schengen-associated vehicles (from Germany, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, Czech Republic).

Frontex officers simultaneously have a presence on the Greece - Macedonia border further to the North. Since the beginning of July, [Greek media](#) have reported on sharp increases of people trying to cross the Greece -Macedonia border from Idomeni, with around 200 people a day arriving in the border areas. According to [these reports](#), Greek police, in cooperation with Frontex officers, have been engaging in daily operations in Idomeni to internally deport people to Polykastro and from there to Thessaloniki.

BVMN received first hand accounts of push-backs at the Greece - Macedonia border involving Frontex officers. The [latest case](#) involved two Afghani families with minors (one of which was a 5 month old baby) who entered Macedonia together with a group of 20 single men and were stopped by Frontex patrols and Macedonian police several kilometers inside the country. They were brought back to the Greek border next to Idomeni and left in the middle of the street. The interviewed group identified Frontex by the uniform worn by the officers, and reported being beaten and kicked by them. This new report contributes to the growing list of [international organisations](#) and [media outlets](#) accusing Frontex of violating human rights at European borders.



IMAGE OF A FRONTEX-LED TRAINING IN 2019 (SOURCE: [FRONTEX](#))

TRIESTE NO LONGER A SAFE DESTINATION

Movement on Balkan Route has not stopped in the past months and the border checks throughout the region did not prevent people from arriving in Italy. What has changed are the trends in ethnicity and in the spot of arrival: in particular, the volunteers in Trieste witnessed a steady decrease in the arrival of North-Africans, and a considerable presence of Afghans coming from Serbia as well as Bosnia.

On the other hand in Udine, 70 km north, where the migrants do not usually go, there has been an [increasing presence, with 150 people intercepted in a single weekend](#). They were forced to open a new center in Tricesimo for them. Some - including some police officers - believe this change of route is caused by the new initiative of "informal readmissions" that allows police forces to pushback every migrant that is found within 10 km from the border with Slovenia, that makes Trieste a dangerous place to be. Needless to say that the territory was not ready for such a number of people on the move. This is interesting news to keep in mind insofar as it relates to the increased number of push-backs from Italy observed since June. This past month the Interior Minister Lamorgese proudly stated that "[the re-admission system is working fine](#)". The official statistics refer to some 1,612 migrants caught within the Trieste province, of which 343 re-admitted to Slovenia (updated to 15th June).

The [standard procedure](#) seems to be, after taking these groups into custody:

- use of cultural mediator to get personal data
- foto-signalling and fingerprints - if in Udine, nasal swab to test for Covid-19
- asking for international protection (* theoretical)
- readmission to Slovenia in case of Eurodac positive
- if minor, or unless the medical conditions are critical or suspicious for Covid-19, the person is allowed to enter the Italian territory and be sent to a quarantine facility.

Until now, police officers (as opposed to skilled medical professionals) checked for fever and Covid symptoms, lice or scabies at the border. The even more worrying fact is that a personal message from the head of the Prevention Department recently stated that they were now looking for "[doctors who would help in order to send them back to Slovenia after a medical check](#)" - not for the protection of the person, but the possibility of sending them back.

In practice, when the police intercepts them, they are not allowed to ask for asylum and they do not have a translator that will explain what is happening. They are simply sent back in accordance with the Slovenian authorities.

ASGI decided to [write an answer to the latest declarations](#) of the politicians. In particular:

- underlining how discomforting it is, that the readmission can be perpetrated even in the case of a migrant asking for international protection (* even Dublin states that the Member States need to examine every international protection request, included the ones at the border or transit zones);

Slovenia and Croatia, in the words of Lamorgese, are to be considered part of the EU and therefore safe countries regarding human rights and international conventions. Therefore, most of the people on the move were pushbacked,

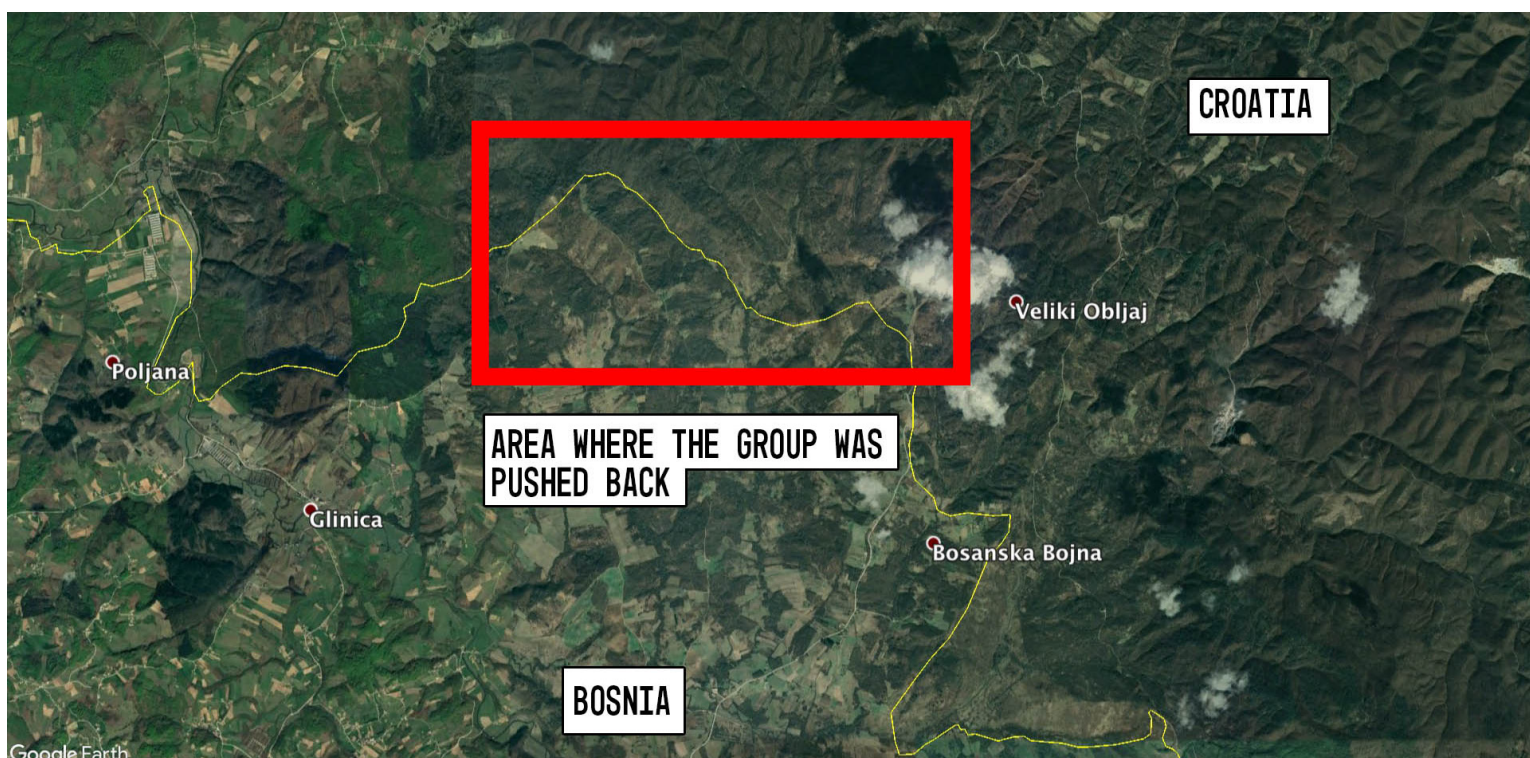
- expressing perplexity about an “information booklet” that would be given to the migrants at the borders about the possibilities of the asylum request. The numerous testimonies denied this fact; the Minister underlines the fact that there should be a form that the Italian police gives to the Slovenian along with the migrants but, even if this were true, it is not made public.

especially from [Trieste](#). This is emphasized by the fact that no new structure has been opened and the people who came before May were not all re-distributed.

CEMENT BORDER STONES AND EU FUNDING

This past month No Name Kitchen recorded a [testimony](#) for BVMN of a push-back along the Bosnian-Croatian border near the Croatian village of Mali Obljaj, Croatia. The group of 22 men, who were initially from Pakistan and the disputed Kashmir region, were initially apprehended in a forest area outside

of the Croatian city of Varazdin before being apprehended and driven directly back to the border area. In this report, as in so many others collected on the BVMN database, the respondents took note of their push-back location in relation to the presence of large concrete blocks marking the border:



“THERE ARE TWO BIG CEMENT BLOCKS NEAR THE BORDER, THEY SPEAK US ‘CROSS THEM AND GO BOSNIA’”

These concrete slabs, marking the border between Bosnia and Croatia in the border area outside of the Croatian villages of Mali Obljaj and Staro Selo Topusko, are just example of the hundreds of procurements facilitated of procurements facilitated

by EU funding for border securitization in Croatia. In 2015, [19 border border roads in the Sisak-Moslavina and Split-Dalmatia border areas were blocked with concrete slabs](#) financed by the EU’s Schengen Facility funding at a cost of 50,453 EUR. These procurements of concrete slabs are but a drop in the ocean of the more than 100 million euros made available to Croatia by the EU for border security in the last decade. Their presence represents the pervasive nature of EU funding in Croatia’s border landscape.

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION

SLOVENIA

CRUCIAL COURT FINDING ON COLLECTIVE EXPULSION

In July, the Slovenian Administrative court ruled in favour of a man from Cameroon who was denied the right to apply for asylum and arbitrarily returned to Croatia whereupon he was pushed back to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The court decided that [“The Republic of Slovenia has violated the Applicant’s right to asylum](#) (Article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights), [the prohibition of collective expulsions](#) (Article 19 § 1), [and the prohibition of torture](#) (Article 19 § 2)”. His case is identical to the tens of thousands of people who have been similarly returned to Bosnia since 2018. This case was brought to light in part due to the tireless work of BVMN and its member organizations, in particular InfoKolpa, who have published evidence used in this case. This decision, once seen through its appeal process, could have far-reaching impacts on the way that the Slovenian state engages push-backs.

It is also of note to point that in the days following this decision, a protest was organized by people-on-the-move detained in the [Postojna](#) Center for Foreigners in Slovenia. According to people who we spoke to inside of the center, this protest was organized by people-on-the-move to protest their detention and the news that steps would be taken to return them to Croatia whereupon their push-back to Bosnia would be all but guaranteed. In the following days, POP TV, a major media outlet in Slovenia, published official information that had been distributed to members of the country’s police directorate, instructing the unlawful detention of asylum seekers within the detention centre in Postojna. The directive explicitly stated that when a person begins their asylum procedure

they should immediately be detained and be held in detention until they receive a decision about their asylum request. This effort is largely born out of a desire that the practice of detaining asylum seekers will deter migrants from using Slovenian territory as a migratory route. According to POP TV’s report and Info Kolpa’s synthesization,



these instructions were meant to be used for a testing period from 3 June to 3 July, but it seems that the practice is continuing. In the month and a half since the issue of the directives there have been 75 appeals regarding detention of asylum seekers to the administrative court and only in the 22 cases the court approved the order for detention, the remaining 53 were considered to be [unlawful](#).

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

VIDEO OF PUSHBACK ACROSS THE DRINA RIVER

This month, Klix.ba, a local Bosnian media outlet, published a video claiming to show migrants crossing the border from Serbia into Bosnia-Herzegovina, close to the city of Zvornik along the Drina river. The video consists of two merged clips, showing two groups of people crossing a river. Closer scrutiny of this material, however, shows that this framing is misleading.

As members of the Border Violence Monitoring Network, investigators from No Name Kitchens and independent affiliation analyzed this material and found strong evidence to suggest that these clips in fact show illegal push-backs being carried to Serbia by Bosnian border authorities. When contextualized, this material sheds significant light on how these operations are carried out by the Bosnian state.



A full analysis of this video will be released in the coming weeks however for the purposes of this monthly report we will contextualize the process of push-backs from Bosnia to Serbia through a [testimony](#) collected by No Name Kitchen for BVMN:

THE POLICE OFFICERS PUSHED THE RESPONDENTS IN THE BOAT AND CARRIED THEM TOWARDS AN ISLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RIVER. ACCORDING TO THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN BY THE RESPONDENT, THE ISLAND WAS MEDIUM SIZE: "THERE WAS ENOUGH SPACE TO STAY", SAYS THE RESPONDENT

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RIVER, THE BOAT STARTED TAKING ON WATER. SO, THE OFFICERS ORDERED THE GROUP OF RESPONDENTS TO JUMP IN THE RIVER, THEY TURNED THE BOAT AND HEADED BACK TO THE SHORE. THE RESPONDENTS REACHED THE ISLAND BY SWIMMING. THE STREAM OF THE RIVER WAS STRONG BUT, FORTUNATELY, THE RESPONDENTS WERE GOOD SWIMMERS.

Overwhelmingly, push-backs to Serbia carried out by Bosnian border authorities take place over the Drina river [referred by some as Bosnia's 'blue border'] and are accomplished either on foot or with the assistance of boats.

Being a non-EU border with less high profile instances of police violence than Croatia, push-backs from Bosnia are often overlooked by media and NGO reporting efforts [BVMN included].

CONTINUED DISPLACEMENT TO LIPA

In the [document 4 A/HRC/44/42/Add.2](#) regarding his visit to BiH, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants noted "with concern the large discrepancy between the maximum capacity for accommodation in reception centres and the estimated number of migrants, including asylum seekers, in the country."

Settled at the outset of the COVID-19 outbreak, Lipa Camp is already hosting over its [capacity](#). Despite being overcrowded, removals have kept occurring and according to the people on the move interviewed by BVMN and other volunteers' testimonies, people are forcibly removed from the places where they squat or reside in paid and private accommodation, rounded up and driven to Lipa in USK, or to Usivak and Blazuj in Canton Sarajevo, where they are often not admitted due to lack of space.

In a [case from July 8th](#), a person-on-the-move explained that "sometimes large groups of people staying in abandoned buildings were taken en masse to Lipa by the local Bosnian police. But once driven there, sometimes the camp staff weren't admitting people, so they would be left waiting by the entrance and eventually leave, walking back to Bihac."

This information is [corroborated by the UNHCR](#) that "noted several cases of documented asylum-seekers transferred from their regular private accommodation to the emergency tent centre Lipa, without a clear legal basis. Although UNHCR reacted by advocating with the local authorities for the practice to cease, similar cases were reported [afterwards]."

The continued removals [often violent] put pressure on the already dire circumstances in the camps (see BVMN May report). The remote location of the camp only serves to further isolate already marginalized people and generates problems regarding access to food with stores being far away. The food is provided inside the camp, [volunteers often receive complaints](#) from people inside that the portions are insufficient, and there was even a case of massive food intoxication.

In the previously mentioned push back [case from July 8th](#), the interviewed, a young adult male, explains how after being violently pushed back from Croatia to BiH, they were sent to Lipa by the Bosnian authorities, where there were:

"NO BEDS AND SOME GUYS SLEEP IN TWO, THE SITUATION FOR REFUGEES IS NOT GOOD. [THERE'S] NO SHOP OR MARKET, ONLY ONE SMALL SHOP, BUT VERY EXPENSIVE, IT'S A BIG PROBLEM"

Moreover, some of the protections and services for unaccompanied minors are not provided, and the situation got worse and the people more isolated since the corona virus lockdown. In that sense, the young man highlights one protection issue which is the non delivery of a camp card, also confirmed to BVMN by DRC who reported that all people-on-the-move were not registered and issued a Lipa card despite having been taken to stay there.

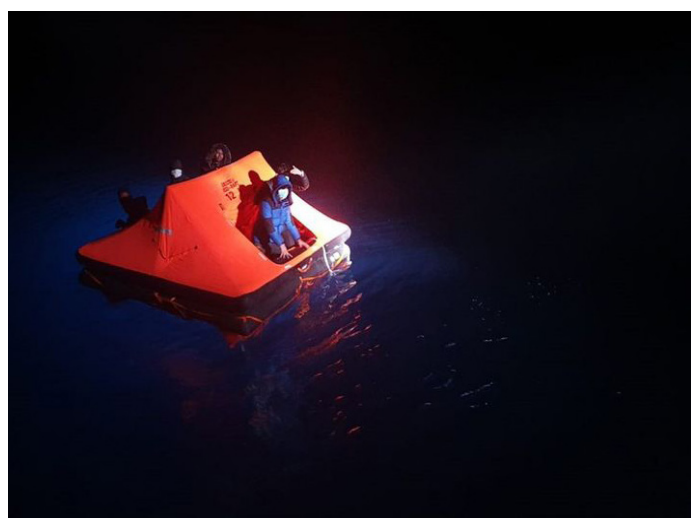
"THEY ARREST HERE FROM SQUAT AND TAKE TO LIPA SIDE. WHY IOM DON'T GIVE LIPA CARD? WHY THEY ARE SHIFT YOU TO HERE?"

[According to the UNHCR](#), those restrictions of movement and isolation also affect "the mental health of the beneficiaries and increase[e] the symptoms of anxiety, insomnia and depression. Psychosocial support activities were provided to a limited degree, but resources and capacities are largely insufficient to serve those in need."

GREECE

DETENTION: A STRENGTHENED TOOL IN GREECE

Over the last months of lockdown in the state of Greece, BVMN has been reporting on an increasingly harsh pushback regime that extended [outside of border regions](#) into [central cities](#). This culminated in [the pushback of almost forty individuals](#) whilst they were attempting to access food and medical care, essential humanitarian services. Having faced extensive media attention from outlets such as [Deutsche Welle](#) and [In-foMigrants](#), the Greek state paused their openly violent and violating pushback system.



REFUGEES CROSSING THE AEGEAN OFTEN FACE DETENTION ONCE ARRIVING IN MAINLAND GREECE (SOURCE: SPIEGEL)

Over the month of July it has become clear to partners on the ground that detention has become a strengthened tool in the place of pushbacks to Turkey. Each day large groups of undocumented individuals are arrested and taken to Pre-Removal Detention Facilities in the regions of Drama and Xanthi; the former having already been implicated in [pushback practices](#).

According to the new law which codifies the most recent recast of the Common European Asylum System (L. 4636/2019), and was heavily critiqued by organisations like [Amnesty International](#) and the [Greek Council for Refugees](#), individuals can be detained for up to 18 months, and potentially longer, without any activity on their case. Furthermore, it appears as if police officers are targeting Moroccan and Algerian communities, as they have been deemed as arriving from "safe countries of origin", and fast-tracking their cases, often resulting in a negative decision, in what is feared to be a primer for mass deportations. Whilst these practices are seemingly unconnected to the pushback regime implemented by the Greek state, they reflect the same trend of the criminalisation of irregular movement, justifying such highly punitive responses.

MONTENEGRO

NEW FRONTEX MISSION DEPLOYED



FRONTEX UNITS IN MONTENEGRO (SOURCE: [FRONTEX](#))

On July 15th, FRONTEX, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, launched its operation in Montenegro, its second outside the European Union after [the Agency deployed border guards to the Greek-Albanian border](#) last year. Pending final negotiations and approvals of “status agreements”, similar missions are set to commence across the remaining Western Balkan countries in the coming years.

According to a [FRONTEX press release](#), the operation’s mandate is focussed on cross border crime, including tackling “migrant smuggling”. This language lays bare a fundamental contradiction at the heart of FRONTEX’ mandate. On the one hand, FRONTEX’ role as a border protection agency implicitly and explicitly includes the prevention and deterrence of “illegal” border crossings. In this role, FRONTEX officers have repeatedly violated the non-refoulement principle, most atrociously when FRONTEX officers were part of a joint operation with Hungarian police during which people-on-the-move were subjected to [canine attacks, pepper spray, and beatings](#) on the Serbian side of the fence. On the other hand, FRONTEX operations are meant to respect “fundamental rights”. The term is included at least nine times in the [Status Agreement](#)

[with Montenegro](#). Additionally, the Status Agreement includes a specific provision that FRONTEX’ executive director may suspend or terminate the operation if the non-refoulement principle is violated. With respect to the rights of people-on-the-move, the resolution of the contradiction between Fundamental Rights and the prevention of “migrant smuggling” is of critical importance. So far, FRONTEX has never suspended an operation over Fundamental Rights concerns. Even in the above-mentioned case, cooperation between FRONTEX and Hungarian authorities continued despite a [recommendation by FRONTEX’ Consultative Forum](#) to suspend the operation. Three factors have helped FRONTEX evade its Fundamental Rights obligations. First, the Fundamental Rights officer, tasked with investigating so-called Serious Incident reports, is [chronically understaffed](#) despite FRONTEX’ rapid growth. Second, FRONTEX officers enjoy [far-reaching immunity](#) as part of the Status Agreements with non-member states. Finally, an important attraction for non-member states to work with FRONTEX are its technical resources, including aerial surveillance and face recognition technology. By providing this kind of technical assistance, FRONTEX directly enables but does not itself engage in Fundamental Rights violations.

GLOSSARY OF REPORTS, JULY 2020

The Network covered the pushback of 389 people across 21 separate incidents in July, 2020. The reports account for a wide demographic of people including men, women and minors, those in official camp accommodation and others in informal settlements; they also include pushbacks across various types of borders including land, river and sea. The respondents originate from a broad set of countries, including: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Kurdistan, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. It is important to remember that these numbers are only the pushbacks which our alliance was able to record; due to COVID restrictions and evolving government tactics, there are less international observers on the ground to report on these events.

The cases involved are outline below:

- I 13 pushbacks to Serbia - seven from Croatia, four from Romania, one from Bosnia-Herzegovina and one from Hungary.
- II Four pushbacks to Bosnia-Herzegovina - all from Croatia.
- III Three pushbacks from Greece to Turkey - all involving large numbers of people.
- IIII One pushback to Greece from North Macedonia.

LINK	INCIDENT	RECORDED	GROUP	DEMOGRAPHIC
BOSNIA-HERZ. TO SERBIA				
1.1	23rd July	31st July	4	Egypt, Syria
ROMANIA TO SERBIA				
2.1	13th June	14th July	22	Palestine, Syria
2.2	20th June	4th July	5	Afghanistan
2.3	28th June	5th July	30	Palestine, Syria
2.4	11th July	14th July	12	Afghanistan, Kurdistan
HUNGARY TO SERBIA				
3.1	6th July	14th July	18	Afghanistan
CROATIA TO SERBIA				
4.1	17th June	1st July	20	Afghanistan
4.2	3rd July	4th July	7	Afghanistan, Pakistan
4.3	10th July	14th July	18	Afghanistan
4.4	14th July	21st July	1	Tunesia
4.5	16th July	17th July	20	Afghanistan
4.6	16th July	17th July	5	Afghanistan
CROATIA TO BOSNIA-HERZ.				
5.1	15th June	4th July	11	Afghanistan
5.2	8th July	13th July	20	Afghanistan, Morocco, Pakistan
5.3	14th July	23rd July	4	Pakistan
5.4	27th July	30th July	22	Kashmir, Pakistan
NORTH. MAC. TO GREECE				
6.1	25th July	25th July	29	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan
GREECE TO TURKEY				
7.1	26th May	14th July	36	Morocco, Palestine, Syria
7.2	7th June	8th July	31	Morocco, Algeria, Pakistan
7.3	18th July	18th July	68	Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Syria
FIND ALL REPORTS ON THE DATABASE HERE .				

NETWORK STRUCTURE AND CONTACT

B O R D E R
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M O N I T O R I N G
N E T W O R K

BVMN is a volunteer led endeavour, acting as an alliance of organisations in the Western Balkans and Greece. BVMN is based on the efforts of participant organizations working in the field of documentation, media, advocacy and litigation. We finance the work through charitable grants and foundations, and are not in receipt of funds from any political organisation. The expenditures cover transport subsidies for volunteers in the field and four paid positions.

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JULY — R — E — P — O — R — T — 2020



Border Violence
Monitoring Network